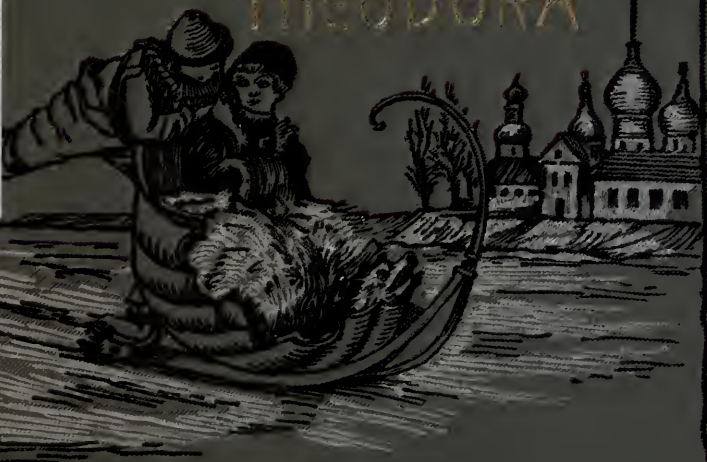


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MICHAEL AND THEODORA



A RUSSIAN STORY



BY CAMELIA E. BARR



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She raised her eyes to his face.

MICHAEL

AND

THEODORA

A RUSSIAN STORY

BY

AMELIA E. BARR,

AUTHOR OF "BORDER SHEPHERDESS," "BOW OF ORANGE
RIBBON," "THE PREACHER'S DAUGHTER," ETC.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	5
“ II.	27
“ III.	54
“ IV.	70
“ V.	89
“ VI.	115
“ VII.	140

TWO CHILDREN WITH ONE HEART.

I.

IT was Theodora and Michael Bazaroff who made this story. Holding it sacred, I shall not alter it. All is here as it happened.

Theodora and Michael Bazaroff were the children of the Prince Ivan Bazaroff, and of his wife, the Princess Nadia. The family were exceedingly rich, and of the noblest strain in Russia, and Prince Ivan had spent his youth in close relations with the Czar and his court. His prosperity was so great, and his position so lofty, that it seemed impossible he should ever know the meaning of poverty or disgrace.

Yet in a single night misfortune over-

took him. An enemy spoke a word or two in the Czar's ear, and the accusation was so plausible and so likely that, without charge and without trial, Prince Ivan and his beautiful wife were cast into prison, and from thence secretly removed to the awful land of Siberia. They were taken away at midnight, without knowledge of each other's destination, and without any opportunity of saying farewell to their children.

Then Prince Sergius Bazaroff came in the Czar's name as guardian of the estate, and of his young nephew and niece, and all the people trembled at his dark face and violent manners. Prince Sergius had long hated his brother; he had gladly been the instrument of his ruin, and he rejoiced in it. Was it likely, then, he would love Theodora and Michael?

He did not, indeed, openly and flagrantly ill use them. They had the food and clothing, and the service suitable to

their rank. But he taunted the children with their parents' degradation; he described to the innocent little ones the intolerable sufferings they were enduring, and when they wept at his words he called their tears "treason," and terrified their childish hearts with cruel suspicions and dreadful threats. So day by day they trembled in his presence, or listened in fear to his terrible voice, as he went raging about among his slaves, or sitting at his dinner-table until after midnight, shouting out wild Tartar battle songs.

One, two, three comforts had these little children. First of all, they loved the good God truly with all their hearts; and the good God knows how to comfort those who love him. Second, they loved each other with a strong, unselfish affection. Michael thought first of all of his sister's happiness; and Theodora, with purest prayers and tenderest love, clung to her brother Michael. Third, they were

both very faithfully loved by those who had them in their care. Theodora's nurse, Matrina, taught her how to knit and embroider, and how to behave herself like a Russian princess ; and she talked to her continually of her absent father and mother, and reminded her when the hours to pray for them came. Very frequently she would say, —

“Now, we will talk a little of the good Prince, your father. How brave he was ! How truly pious ! How noble and how handsome ! When he was mounted on his black horse — when he wore his white and gold uniform — there was no prince in all Russia that was fit to hold his stirrup. Indeed this is the truth. You yourself, dear Princess, can remember ?”

“Alas, alas, Matrina ! I remember till my heart breaks with sorrow.”

“And then, also, how lovely was the most excellent Princess, your mother ! I shall be happy to my dying day, only

to have seen her. Have you memory of that night when she came to you in a saraphan of silver brocade, buttoned with sapphires? Her lovely white arms were covered with jewels, but she took you from your little couch and carried you in them. She held you close to her breast; she kissed you, and said a prayer over you, when you fell asleep again. Only your guardian angel could love you better than your sweet mother! that I know well."

Theodora remembered that night. She was only four years old then, and she was ten now, but she had never forgotten the starry look of her beautiful mother.

"I had a fever that night, I think, Matrina," she answered, "for I can feel yet the coolness of her soft hands; and often my heart stands still to listen to the cooing of the low words she said on my very lips. And there was a little song she sang. I can never forget the melody. I would that I knew the words."

“The words, my dear Princess, were the words of the ‘Star Song.’ It was the eve of the Epiphany, and, as you know, all Russia was singing the song that night.”

“We never sing it now, Matrina.”

“We sing not at all now, dear Princess. We only weep.”

“Say the words to me, Matrina. Let me hear them again.”

“Listen, then : —

‘O stars! stars!
Dear little stars!
All ye, O stars!
Are the fair children,
Ruddy and white,
Of one mother.
Send forth, O stars!
On the blessed Epiphany,
Send forth through the christened world,
Proposers of happiness.’ ”

“Was that indeed the Christmas song my mother sang? Alas, Matrina, there is no feast of Epiphany or Christmas now for us! I asked Unele Sergius once about

it, and he said ‘we were not worthy to keep the feast.’ ”

In this way the little Princess talked to her nurse of her beloved parents. For it was a comfort to speak with Matrina of their affection and their beauty, to weep with her over their misfortunes, and then to go away into solitude and pray with all her heart for *The Deliverer*.

Michael was two years older than his sister; a tall, brave boy, with a bright, handsome face, and a true, loving soul. It troubled him that he had only twelve years; for his hope by day and his dream by night was to be able to justify his father and mother, and bring them back to their home and their people, in honor and triumph. But what can a boy of twelve years old do,—a boy under constant surveillance and control, not permitted to go outside the boundaries of the estate? Fortunately, Michael had for his tutor a very wise and good man, one

who had loved his father, and who believed firmly in Prince Ivan's innocence.

"If I could only free my father and mother. If I could convince our good father, the Czar, how true and loyal they are, I could lay down my life! Yes, I could lay down my life with joy! God knows it."

"To do such things, Michael," answered the tutor, "one must needs be wise in mind and strong in body. I have planned for you a course of study. It will take you four years."

"And when I have finished my course, what then, master?"

"Then you will handle a sword, and fight the battles of your mother, Russia."

"So; and when I have taken a strong fortress, or won a great battle, I will go to the Emperor and say, 'Oh great and good Czar! how is it possible that I am the son of a traitor?' I will plead with strong words for my father and my

mother. I shall not be afraid. But, alas, the years go slow; my father and my mother they suffer, they may die. It is too long to wait and do nothing; and the Czar is so far away."

"But, Michael, a little prayer goes farther away, even to the heaven of heavens. Have you forgotten your good brother, Jesus? How often he pities and does for us that thing which is to us impossible."

Yes, Michael admitted this hope and this consolation, and he lifted his trusting eyes as if to invoke help. Also, he put back his shoulders and stretched out his supple young arms, and longed with an almost impossible loyalty to bring back his banished by some labor of his own body or some sacrifice of his own desires.

One afternoon in November the boy and his tutor were talking of these things in a low voice. It had been a day of fear

and sadness. Prince Sergius had been quarrelling all throughout it with a stranger — a bad, common-looking man dressed in a sheepskin coat. Mr. Cecil, the tutor of Michael, and Matrina, the nurse of Theodora, had kept their charges close and quiet. It was a great thing to be forgotten by Prince Sergius when he was raging in his passions. As for the stranger, he did not appear to be frightened by the Prince's temper. They could hear his loud, rough voice contradicting and asserting, and sometimes also a riotous laugh full of scorn and defiance. Matrina was on the alert and very thoughtful.

“The man is not quite a stranger,” she said in the afternoon. “I have seen him here before. Yes, I have; and the scribe Smoloff has told me that he bayed back at Prince Sergius' ten words for one. Who can a man be that would dare to do that? I have seen the dogs set on a visitor for far less.”

A little later she went down to the great kitchens, and when she returned she said to Mr. Cecil and the children, —

“Smoloff says the man is a wonder. Smoloff saw him walking up and down the room, talking like one who will have his say. Yes, indeed, and so at his ease about it, that he stopped as he wanted to, and took nuts from the table and cracked them between his big finger and thumb as if they were no more than egg-shells. And when he did so the Prince’s eyes were like flames, and he looked at him from under his eyelids as if he were a dog ready to tear open the fellow’s throat.”

“Was it Russian they spoke?” asked Mr. Cecil.

“Not so; it was French, and Smoloff knows not a word of French; only he heard the Prince Ivan’s name more than once; yes, he could say he heard it very often. That may mean something, then,

again, it may mean nothing; only the good God knows."

Every one was weary with the fear and turmoil of the visit. All day long there had been the trampling of horses and baying of dogs, threats, orders, and hurrying of terrified women and men, until the palace felt as if a great storm had passed through it. But towards the close of the afternoon, Prince Sergius and the stranger went out of the house together. The stranger was then smiling, and he made as if he would speak fairly and affably, but the angry Prince looked neither to the right nor the left, nor yet at his visitor; neither did he answer him one word. On the contrary, his face was black as a thunder-cloud, and the very dogs but looked at him, and then sneaked out of his path and his sight.

From the schoolroom it was easy to watch the two men until they passed into a thick belt of pine-trees and were lost

in the shadow they made. Thén Mr. Cecil said, "Come, Michael, let us go into the fresh air; it will calm and strengthen us, and there is yet half an hour before the darkness."

Matrina also rose at his words and brought Theodora her pelisse of fine fox fur, and her cap and muff, and they went out together to the esplanade in front of the house. The snow was deep, but a path had been cleared for walking, and with rapid steps they followed it. Theodora and Matrina were in front; Michael and his tutor walked behind them.

The prospect was inexpressibly dreary. Except for the pine belt, it was one great level of snow, silent, mournful, monotonous. A few black huts were scattered here and there, but they looked like dead homes, for there was no sight or sound of human life near them. The children talked of whatever concerned them most

at the moment: Theodora of the bag she was making, Michael of his studies, and, in a low voice, of his uncle's anger.

Suddenly there was a little swirling wind. It blew a bit of white paper off the white snow straight to Michael's feet. He stooped and lifted it, and as his tutor talked to him, he glanced at the words written there. They were written in French, but he knew enough of French to perceive in a moment the importance of the paper which the wind of God had blown to him.

He became pale and breathless. Without a word he gave the paper to his teacher. The emotion of both was intense. They went silently and rapidly back to the schoolroom, and then Mr. Cecil, as he looked steadily into Michael's face, cut in the collar of his own coat a little slit, and hid the paper within it. This act was scarcely accomplished when Theodora and Matrina entered.

"It is so very cold!" said Matrina. "Besides which, we heard the Prince talking in the wood. And then, we perceived you also had felt the cold. After all, the stove and the stone roof are better than the wide world when it is winter weather." She was talking thus as she removed Theodora's pelisse and cap and gave her the bag she was making.

Michael stood trembling by the window. Mr. Cecil perceived his emotion and feared it. He said with an assumed indifference, "Quick, Michael! Let us finish the problem we left unsolved."

"It is so long until I am a man," replied Michael; for he was answering his own thought, and not his teacher's suggestion.

"But, in the mean time, Michael, the problem is the best and wisest thing. A slate and pencil might even be a bulwark."

Michael understood. He took his slate and sat down at a desk by the side of

Mr. Cecil. They were both apparently deeply interested in some arithmetical question, when Prince Sergius suddenly opened the door. Usually, his approach could be heard afar off; and this sudden and quiet visit was not an accident. He had, indeed, discovered the loss of the paper found by Michael, and he wished to see whether those he feared most had become its possessor.

He strode into the room and looked with keen, fierce eyes around him. Theodora was plaiting ribbons for her bag. Matrina sat at her side, sewing. Over the slate and book Michael and his tutor were bending. All rose to their feet and stood waiting his orders; all, with bowed heads and lowered eyes, except the tutor, who gazed out of the window with a melancholy and indifferent air. Sergius looked most keenly at the women. He was sure if anything had been discovered, their faces would betray it.

But Theodora and Matrina knew nothing to betray, for Michael walked behind them, and they had neither noticed the blowing paper nor yet seen Michael stoop and pick it up. Their faces were absolutely innocent of any unusual emotion, and Prince Sergius perceived readily that they were totally unaware of his loss. Though always brutal to the native, the Russian noble compels himself to give an ostentatious politeness to any foreigner in his service; therefore, Prince Sergius bowed to the tutor as he said, —

“Mr. Cecil, do me the favor to take again your chair. I am sure your pupil is idle and impertinent. Do not spare the lash. A taste of the whip will be good for him. Father and son both need it. The Emperor was of my opinion also. Pray let me know if he gives you any trouble. I shall be well pleased to undertake his punishment myself.” And he looked at Michael with a steady savage-

ness, drawing together his light, lowering eyebrows as he did so. Michael did not speak, did not lift his eyelids, but Prince Sergius saw with delight that the child's cheeks burned, and that his small hands were passionately clinched. He smiled scornfully at the futile anger, and then turned to Matrina.

"Hark thee, Matrina! Come here! Listen! Pack the girl's clothing. Tomorrow the Countess Vasil comes for her. The saints know I am well rid of such a trouble. Dost understand?"

"I understand, Prince; and I obey."

"Be off then."

With the words he turned on his heel, bowed to Mr. Cecil, and left the room. For some minutes afterwards there was a deep silence. No one spoke, no one moved, they all felt as if it was full of danger to glance at each other. But as Prince Sergius did not return, they gradually ventured to resume their seats and

to look around ; for each heart was full of new and overwhelming feeling. In a day or two what changes might begin ! Theodora was going to a strange life, a life full of splendor and action ; perhaps also full of love. The Countess Vasil was her mother's only sister ; surely she must love a child so desolate and so bereaved !

But Theodora trembled and feared. She did not remember her aunt. She was going among strangers. She was going to leave Michael. Prince Sergius had not even said that Matrina was to accompany her. She could not imagine life without Matrina. Her mother had gone away one day from Bazaroff to St. Petersburg, and she had never come back again. The poor girl dreaded the unknown evils of the great world ; for though Bazaroff was full of terror, there, at least, she had Michael and Matrina.

Before her altar that night Theodora

knelt a long time. When she rose her face was shining and happy. "Her angel has spoken to her," thought Matrina; and Matrina was not wrong. To an innocent girl the angels whisper many sweet things; they delight to guard her from all evil; to bear her pure prayers to heaven; to keep her ever unspotted from the world.

In the mean time Michael and his tutor sat silently over the large porcelain stove. Their thoughts were too great, too full of fear and sorrow for much speech; beside, much speech might be dangerous. But in short, whispered sentences, with long pauses between them, they came at last to a decision.

"Theodora must be told," said Mr. Cecil. "The letter must be trusted to her. It is the best we can do, Michael, and also there will be no time lost."

"That is everything, teacher. I wish that I had wings, I would fly to St.

Petersburg, to the good Czar. He should know all in one hour."

"Theodora will find the right time. She is brave as well as prudent. Her aunt will be of the greatest advantage, for Countess Vasil has a great deal of influence, and she adores her sister. I am sure she will not lose a moment."

"If I could go myself! Cannot I go? The letter came to me. Dear master, can I not go?"

"My boy, you are a prisoner on this estate. If you cross its boundaries, your uncle, your own serfs, would have the right to shoot you."

"How, then, can Theodora leave Bazaroff?"

"I have no doubt her aunt had to procure the Czar's permission for her to do so."

"It is terrible! What can the Emperor fear from me? I love our good father. I would fight for him. I would die for

him and for Russia. To be treated like a traitor to my own country and my Emperor, it is very hard !”

“But when the day breaks the shadows flee away. Michael, I see the dawn. I believe your father and mother will come back to their home and their children and their people. They will come back and find their honor unstained, and themselves beloved and unforgotten. There is an hour of great joy at hand. Let us say no more to-night. Try and sleep. You must learn to be calm. If you lose control of yourself, your heart will tell your secret. Prince Sergius will read it in your face, see it in your carriage, feel it in a hundred impalpable impressions.”

But the boy sat musing and planning, his face growing finer and finer, as

“He built with neither hammer nor stone
A grand fair castle of his own.”

II.

“Manifold are the changes
Which Providence may bring;
Many unhopèd-for things
God’s power hath brought about.”

Euripides.

THE next day Theodora was sitting in the schoolroom with Matrina, when the Countess Vasil’s sleigh, with its chiming bells, its gay postilions, and liveried horsemen in attendance, drove with a great clatter into Bazaroff courtyard. Theodora let her work fall and flew to the window overlooking the courtyard. She was but a girl of ten years, and she could not control the curiosity and the tender yearning for affection which made the advent of this dear sister of her mother’s a very possible deliverance for her. Matrina pitied her too much to interfere,

and Mr. Cecil and Michael looked with questioning, interested faces at the watching girl.

“I see her! I see our aunt, dear Michael!” she cried. “She is beautiful, splendid! more than all, I am sure she is like our dear mother! Prince Sergius advances to meet her. She kisses his cheek. They have spread the velvet carpets on the courtyard for her to tread upon. She is coming into the house! I am sure she is speaking of us; I saw her lift her face to these windows! Oh, how gracious she is! I wonder if to-day we shall see and speak to her!”

Mr. Cecil said, “It was unlikely. So great a lady would require all kinds of attentions before she would recover from the fatigue of her long journey.” He advised the children to pursue their usual duties, and not to expect too much from a relative who had not seen them since they were but babies. He himself was

strangely melancholy and quiet, and his mood so far influenced the children as to make them apparently resume their ordinary occupations.

A great sadness and silence fell on all. The room was as quiet as if its occupants were asleep. For a little while Theodora strained her hearing to listen for her aunt's footsteps. Surely she would come and speak to them. But it seemed as if the huge palace had never before been so quiet. She grew hysterical in the stillness; she felt that noise of any kind would be a relief.

"Why is everything so quiet? Why does no one come here? Neither Muzza, nor Karma, nor Peteroff. Why does no one come, Matrina?" she asked in a nervous, irritable voice.

"It may be the Countess wishes to sleep, or perhaps the servants are in the great kitchen being courteous to the servants of the Countess. It is not

often they see any company from the world outside, dear Princess. Yes, that is undoubtedly the case; they are all busy talking and eating in the kitchen."

"Ah, Matrina! if I had been only a little serf, I could have run to meet my aunt. I could have said, 'Dear aunt, you are beautiful! you are the likeness of my beloved mother! I love you!' But, alas! I am a miserable princess! I must wait, and be still, and go nowhere I want to go, and say nothing I want to say. I wish, then, I was a happy little serf."

"Mademoiselle the Princess must be content with the place in which God has put her," said Mr. Cecil. He spoke with an air of authority, and Theodora lifted her work and began to embroider, while the tears dropped down upon the stitches. Michael had his book open and his eyes upon it; whether he read the words or not, Mr. Cecil did not inquire. He was glad to see that the boy had sufficient

control over himself to affect the calmness and patience it was very unlikely he felt.

Mr. Cecil was writing a letter; Matrina stood by the window overlooking the great plain. She was longing to go to Moscow with her dear Princess, and her anxiety did not permit her to work. For half an hour these four all suffered. Each minute appeared to be twenty minutes; they could not believe they were going so swiftly away, and *no one was coming*. The painful tension soon exhausted itself. A sombre silence fell on each; they could no longer wonder, or hope, or make excuses; they were smitten with an intense apathy. At that moment the two children were sick with despair; for children do not reason much. Alas, alas! they can only feel; and they feel so bitterly! They were sure they were forgotten by their aunt. Unkissed, unloved, unspoken to, both of them felt broken-hearted.

Michael was proud and angry, and his cheeks burned. Theodora wept as she mechanically put her needle through and through her wearisome embroidery.

Then, without a sound, the door opened, and the Countess Vasil, with a face glowing with love and joy, entered. She looked at Michael with a smile; she stretched out her arms to Theodora; in a moment both children were folded within them; she was kissing the tears off their cheeks, and whispering all the sweet words she could remember upon their lips: "My beloved Michael! My darling Theo! My Nadia's children! My own little ones! Did you think I had forgotten you? Ah, my dear ones, I have had my difficulties; and not the least with Prince Sergius. He would see all my papers ere I might see you, and he was so long, so long, I thought he was reading them one word in one minute. Mr. Cecil, I have the honor and pleasure

to see again Prince Ivan's friend. Give me your hand, sir, faithful one that you have been!"

Thus she was talking to all at once, not even slighting Matrina, whom she kissed on her cheeks. Joy had come into the sorrowful place; it was possible now to breathe in the room without desiring to weep.

But it was evident her visit had been made without the knowledge of Prince Sergius. She said a few words privately to Mr. Cecil, and intimated the desirability of caution by quoting with a peculiar emphasis the proverb, "When the big bear is sleeping, the little bears must play without making a noise." And I shall run off now, and when I come again we will not remember that I have been before. That will be most prudent, children." And the children understood from her words that she had visited them secretly.

Mr. Cecil opened the door and passed

outside with her a moment. "Countess," he said, "you will hear great news soon. I pray you take God in council and move quickly."

"I know not what you mean, Mr. Cecil."

"The child will tell you when you are beyond Bazaroff. It is too great a matter to talk about here."

"Alas! what can a child do?"

"Alone, a child can do little; with God, a child may do everything. Countess, is not a farthing candle enough to set St. Petersburg in a blaze?"

"Indeed that is true, but not likely, sir. However, it is always the unlikely thing which happens, and whatever is to be done, you may say to yourself, 'Countess Vasil will do it with all her heart and friends, and with all her wealth.'"

With this assurance they parted, and Mr. Cecil had no other opportunity for conversation with the Countess. She paid

only one more visit to the schoolroom, and that was in the company of Prince Sergius. At this time she was a different woman. She kissed the children with a formal affection, and then began to complain of the manner in which Theodora was dressed and of her want of polite behavior. Prince Sergius made some apologies, but she interrupted him with the assertion, "However, Prince, it is now time to improve. The Princess Theodora must at least have the education of her rank. She is truly a Bazaroff."

"To be sure, you are exactly right, Countess," Prince Sergius replied, sulkily. "And I am most thankful to the saints and to you if you rid me of a charge I have little liking and less skill for. Listen, Matrina! To-morrow the Princess will leave for Moscow. See thou that all is ready for the journey."

"And I, noble master?"

"Thou also wilt go to Moscow. Dost understand?"

Matrina bowed to the Prince's feet, nor was she quite able to hide her sense of joy and triumph in the approaching change. She loved Theodora, and she rejoiced because she was not to be parted from her, and she hated the monotony of life, its loneliness and gloom in the sad palace of Bazaroff. She immediately began to pack and to prepare; also to feel a trifle sentimental about Michael and her old companions.

As for Theodora, she spent every moment with her brother talking of the past, planning for the future, and she was not a little mystified at Michael's confident prophecies of a speedy end to all their misfortunes; for it was not until the very last hour Mr. Cecil trusted her with the letter, and even then he chose rather to give her strict directions, than to explain these directions to her.

With an air of the greatest solemnity he took her apart, and in her sight hid the

fateful piece of paper within the lining of the fur collar she wore round her throat. He told her that she must neither by word, nor look, nor deed suffer its presence to be known until she was at home in her aunt's house. He assured her that her father's and her mother's every hope was now in her keeping, — their life, honor, and liberty were in it; that if she lost it, all was lost; and that if she was prudent she would be the savior of her family. And there was no time left for her to inquire, or to demur, or to ask questions. Her cheeks were flaming, her heart bounding; she felt weight of life and death upon her looks and words and actions; but she could not doubt the solemn charge Mr. Cecil had given her, and she did not dare to violate a tittle of it, lest by doing so she should injure those most dear to her.

The journey was not a very pleasant one. The Countess disliked to be wearied or incommoded. She thought it was

a capital crime to make her wait a moment for any personal desire she had. And the taverns on the road were all poor; nothing but large, wooden huts, with a crooked, shaking staircase, and one big room, in which there was perpetually a boiling tea-urn. The towns also were all alike in their dreariness; each one had a high street, and one big store, and one apothecary's store, and a court of justice, and an assembly room; and there was sure to be a square, and a bazaar, and two or three street lamps, and several sentry boxes for the watchmen.

Besides which all towns, big and little, had a governor and a governor's lady; and an innumerable number of functionaries, all very important and very haughty, until they were informed that it was the *cortége* of the most noble Countess Vasil, and then all were exceedingly servile. Theodora was at first

interested by the ceremonies and formalities demanded by all this official state. She thought it a very fine thing to see such great men bend down and kiss her hands, and humbly wish "prosperity to her very chariot wheels." But the frequent repetition of such homage wearied her; and she could not escape from the tedium of many long hours, when the Countess slept, or seemed to sleep.

Then her thoughts flew back to Bazarroff, to the dear brother in the great dreary schoolroom; to Mr. Cecil's kind, melancholy face; to the mysterious paper clasped around her little throat. Very often she secretly put her hand within her collar to feel the slight difference it made in the satin lining, and to be sure it was certainly and safely there. After sleeping, the paper was always her first thought. She was in a terror until she had assured herself of its presence. Indeed there was only one thing which

greatly pleased her during this long, monotonous ride: it was the constant sound of bells; for Russia is the land of bells,—holy bells, that are the joy of far-off, lonely parishes.

In the afternoon of the third day they began to approach the wondrous old city of Moscow, the prototype of all Russian cities. The sleigh of the Countess dashed rapidly through the uneven streets, lined with sharp flint stones; and Theodora was struck dumb with amazement at their endless variety, their grotesque profusion of gold and barbaric ornaments, and the startling blending of every conceivable color in them, — vivid, pale, salient, glaring, as if they had been mixed on the palette of a mad painter.

The human element that pressed close up to their horses was equally vivid and strange. She saw within a short distance monks wearing long, black, flowing robes and tall circular caps and veils; soldiers

in gay uniforms; dark faces of Gypsies, Tartars, Persians, swarthy Jews, and blonde handsome Russians. She saw clerks sitting within the doors of the stores playing dominoes, and fondling their pet cats; nurses in white aprons, long ear-rings, heavy necklaces, and high turban-like caps; merchants, brokers, idlers, and everywhere—for this human element—churches, churches, churches; icons on every wall and above every door; glittering crosses or huge black spread eagles at every angle and on every pinnacle. It was all so bewildering, so amazing! Theodora was speechless. Her heart swelled with native pride. It was singing without words, “Thanks be to God that I am a Russian girl!”

Count Vasil’s house was in the heart of Moscow. It was a vast old Russian palace, with an Oriental look outside, but furnished internally after the most splendid French fashion. Jasper and porphyry

adorned the walls ; columns and pilasters of solid malachite supported the sculptured ceiling ; and every year, cabinet-makers and decorators arrived from Paris, and brought with them all that was necessary to refit with additional magnificence its vast and lofty rooms. Theodora, holding her aunt's hand, passed through numerous apartments. They had all fretted roofs, tessellated pavements, and walls hung with cloths of gold. They were adorned with every variety of ornament, and with furniture in *or moulu* and mother-of-pearl ; and they opened one into the other.

It was like a dream of the night to the little girl. She pressed her aunt's hand tighter, and looked into her face with eyes heavy with tears of hope and delight. When they came to the suite prepared for Theodora, Countess Vasil committed the child to the care of two maids ; and with many loving words and kisses left her to

take rest and refreshment. This suite was furnished in ivory and gold, and pale blue damask woven with silver. The rooms were full of all that could delight a young girl : musical instruments, books, the most delicate toilet necessities, great quantities of flowering plants, singing birds, and a handsome tortoise-shell cat, which lay upon a satin cushion, and looked at his new mistress through slits of eyes full of an inquisitive and rather uncertain air. Evidently he wished to inquire if the Princess Theodora was satisfied with his appearance, and if it was decreed by her that they should be friends. Theodora answered the question by stooping down and fondling the dignified creature ; and he graciously purred his acceptance of her overtures of affection.

Then she was taken to a luxurious bath, clothed in a rich and ample dressing-gown, and served with such a delicate dinner as delighted the hungry girl. She

was very tired, but that night she found it impossible to sleep. Her child-heart was so full of strange emotions, — wonder and gladness at her own changed lot, pity for her darling brother's lonely life, hopes and fears concerning her father and mother's sad fate.

Also, one of the maids had taken away her fur pelisse, and she feared to show her anxiety about the priceless paper hidden in its fur collar. She could only watch and listen until she found an opportunity to steal softly from her bed, search for her pelisse, and take the paper from its hiding place. But the charge of it kept her restless. It was dawn when she fell into a deep slumber, and she was wan and heavy with sleep when Matrina brought her a message from the Countess.

Matrina had put on a new attitude ; she understood that the little child was to be henceforth an object for honor as well as affection ; and she resolutely ignored the

tender familiarity which had been so necessary and comforting in the mean and sorrowful life at Bazaroff.

“The Countess Vasil desires the company of my Princess to breakfast,” she said with vast respect; adding with her old smile, “and to be sure it is a lovely morning, and this house is like heaven, I think. So much company, and the very servants fed like nobles! Ah, indeed, it is now we begin to live, dear Princess! though as for that, all that befalls us was written in a book a thousand years ago.”

“Then I hope it was my good angel wrote down my fate, for, Matrina, this morning I feel as if something was going to happen.”

“God order the hours and the burden they carry, and may each one bring good luck with it. Amen.”

“Amen!” said Theodora; and she crossed her brow, and bowed her head reverently, making at the same time

that act of soul submission we voice in those solemn words, *Thy will be done.*

Matrina, knowing nothing of the paper, wondered at the little interest Theodora took in her toilet. However, she looked exceedingly lovely when she entered the pretty parlor where the Countess waited for her. That lady was in the freshest of French morning-gowns, and she was drinking chocolate. A Parisian maid was waiting upon her, and their conversation was entirely in the French language, which the Countess spoke with great purity and elegance. French newspapers and books were scattered around, and the adornments and atmosphere of the room were utterly un-Russian. It was, indeed, a bit of Paris transported to Moscow.

Theodora alone was out of character with her surroundings, for she still wore a Russian saraphan of dark blue velvet, buttoned with pearls, and showing full

sleeves of the finest Dacca muslin. A lace ruff was round her slender throat; her mittens were of blue silk embroidered with silver thread; her slippers, of blue morocco, had very high silvered heels; and a light blue ribbon held backward her long, flowing curls of pale brown hair.

Her aunt stretched out her hands to her, then she drew her to her side and kissed her lips and cheeks; but she soon noticed how weary and sad the child looked.

"You eat nothing, my little one," she said tenderly. "Are you tired with the long journey? That is not extraordinary. I am myself unable to move."

"It is not that I am tired, dearest aunt," she whispered. "It is because I have such a great thing to carry on my little heart."

"What troubles you? Is it the poor boy, Michael?"

"It is more than Michael. I cannot tell you until we are alone."

"Then I will send Fanchetta away, and you shall tell me now. We can bear 'the great thing' between us, no doubt. Why, then, should you bear it alone? eh, my child? What do you say? Shall I dismiss Fanchetta at once?"

"If you will be so good, it would be a great kindness. I must tell you, aunt. I can bear it no longer. Send every one from the room."

"Even Matrina?"

"Yes, even Matrina."

The Countess looked at the little girl and she was amazed. Theodora's soul was in her eyes. Her dazzlingly fair skin was luminous; it seemed to emanate light. She looked taller. She looked to be all spirit. It was impossible to resist or refuse the suffering, the entreaty, that her face, her words, and her attitude expressed. Taken together, they

had a real speech; they said 'to the Countess, "Arrest yourself, and listen!"

She became suddenly serious and silent, and by an imperative motion ordered every servant from the room. Then Theodora took from her bosom a piece of paper and offered it to her aunt. It was much soiled and crumpled, and the dainty lady touched it with visible reluctance. But ere she had read it through she uttered a shrill cry, rose quickly to her feet and struck the table bell with an extraordinary passion and impatience. A dozen servants flew to answer her summons.

"The Count!" she cried. "The Count! The Count! Tell the Count to come here immediately! Without delay! This very moment."

In the interval she quite forgot that she was "unable to move." She paced the room with rapid steps. In a rapture of joy she kissed Theodora many times.

She murmured and muttered, in Russian and in French, prayers and ejaculations. She was like a woman upon whom has fallen news of incredible happiness — of happiness too great to bear.

When the Count entered the room she ran to meet him, and thrust the paper into his hand. He took it with the air of one who desires to say, “What is all this commotion about? I am annoyed by it.” And he touched the dirty, shabby-looking missive with aversion, feeling a little contempt for the emotion of his wife and niece.

But his own emotion was soon as great as theirs. He read but a few lines ere he went to the corridor and sent all the servants in waiting there on special messages. Then he locked the door, and laying the paper on the table, he read it word by word in an audible whisper,—

“Prince Sergius Bazaroff:—Thou hast not sent me the money. Very well, I

shall come for it in two days. Then, if thou pay me not, I will go to the almighty police. I will tell them how thou swore away the honor and the liberty of thy brother, Prince Ivan, and also of thy brother's wife. I will tell them the whole plot. Every one is yet living whom thou didst employ. I know where to find them. And then thou wilt not escape with Siberia. The good Czar will not breathe in this world with thee. There will be nothing for thee, thou fratricide, but the knout! the knout to death! This is from Alez. Kergoff, at the Inn of the Great Bear, Street of St. John, Moscow."

Having read these words Count Vasil appeared for a moment astounded. His eyes were riveted on the paper. He was not as sanguine as his Countess and Theodora. He foresaw many delays, doubts, and suspicions, which might affect himself. But he was too kind to

utter his fears. On the contrary, he put his arms around Theodora and questioned her closely concerning the stranger who had visited Prince Sergius. Then he said,—

“This duty is now in my hands. I will see to it at once, little one. Nothing that I have will I spare. If I can get the Czar’s ear I shall succeed immediately. But even if there should be delays, in the end all is sure to be put right. I am certain of it. My child, what do you think?”

“I think,” answered Theodora, “that God is greater than the Prince Sergius Bazaroff. I think, too, if the good God begins a great mercy, he will not stop short till it is certain.”

“Ah, to be sure!” cried the Countess passionately. “When the good God comes to judgment, the wicked will not be able to hide themselves. Even the mantle of the Czar will not cover them in

that day. My husband, let not your feet be heavy. When one is saving honor and dear life, it is well to be in a hurry.”

Then Count Vasil went quickly out, but he left a smile of hope behind him. And the Countess cried for joy, and Theodora wept in her arms; and that day they did not go to the great shops as they intended; they sat and talked of the exiles in far Siberia, and of the anxious child still at Bazaroff; and sometimes of the wicked Prince Sergius, and all his wicked doings. And the Countess said, over and over,—

“Well, then, this is true, and often have I said it, ‘Punishment is lame, but it is sure to arrive at the house of the wicked.’”

III.

“ Daughter of Justice, wronged Nemesis :

To all alike thou metest out their due,
Cubit for cubit, inch for inch, stern and true.

Euripides.

THAT day the Countess had intended to take Theodora to the great stores of Moscow, and buy her many new garments ; for she desired to dress her in the French fashion. But the news which the child had brought overthrew all previous plans. The Countess had an irritable, impulsive nature, and she had never been taught to control any emotion that possessed her ; consequently she behaved like an excited child. She walked about the room, clapping her hands to her triumphant anticipations ; or suddenly smitten

with some fancied fear, she was plunged in a moment into despair and tearful forebodings.

She was almost angry at the solemn calmness with which Theodora steadied her soul. She did not understand how the long sad years at Bazaroff had taught the little girl to subdue all passionate expression of feeling, lest by it she should irritate her uncle Sergius, and make the present grief still harder to bear.

Yet for shopping she had now no inclination ; and though she stood at the windows, and looked out upon the motley, picturesque picture, constantly moving through the streets, she was hardly conscious of what passed her mortal vision. She saw far more clearly the big, bare schoolroom at Bazaroff, in which she had spent most of her life ; its white stove, its long table covered with books and slates and needlework, the bright eager

face of her dear brother Michael, and the quiet kindly one of the grave master.

On the next day, however, the Countess became more composed. She had begun to realize that the Czar's presence and attention could not be stormed; and that ere any attempt was made to secure his judgment of the case, all the preliminary work of securing evidence must be perfect.

"And that may take days and days, perhaps even weeks," she cried in a temper of disappointment. "The Count says, this man and the other man are to find; and that some may have gone to St. Petersburg, and some to the end of the Russias, which is the end of the world, I believe, my dear, and some may be afraid to speak; and in short, there seems to be a mountain to climb for every step forward. So then, we may as well make ourselves as happy as the day permits us to be; and the saints, no, nor your dear

mother herself, will make any objections if we go to the silk bazaar, and look at a few things which are so necessary to you. For I tell you truly, Theodora, you are a beautiful girl, even in that provincial dress; then how much more beautiful will you be dressed in the French fashion!"

Theodora shook her head. She did not wish to be turned into a French girl. She was a Russian girl, in the heart of Russia. She was under the shadow of the Kremlin. From its hundreds of shining, golden domes the cross of her faith was glittering. She could not turn her eyes anywhere and not see the black eagles of Russia hovering with vast outspread wings over the city. She loved her country. She loved the great Czar. She had been taught to regard him as Russia's patriarch and father. She never imagined the Czar doing anything unkind or unjust. On

the contrary, he was the savior and comforter of his people.

If she could only reach the steps of his august throne! if she could only fall at his feet! She would put into his hands the letter which she had given to Count Vasil, and then she was certain he would restore her parents to honor and to liberty, without a moment's delay. Yes, and he would also severely punish those wicked ones who had betrayed the innocent to such bitter shame and suffering.

So day after day went slowly past. There was no pleasure taking possible. Theodora scarcely eat or slept. She grew thin and weak. She trembled at a footstep, at the sound even of her own name; and Matrina, who knew nothing of the cause, was dull and disappointed at the change.

“Behold how contrary is good fortune!” she cried in a tone of injury. “At Bazaroff, where we hardly dared to breathe,

where the days were a hundred hours long, and nothing whatever but misery was to be seen or heard tell of, there, to be sure, my Princess was happy. She smiled, and eat her food, and slept like an angel; and now here, in great Moscow, in a palace full of delightful things, where our eyes can see strange sights continually, and our ears ring with pleasant words, and our mouths be full of good things to eat, — here, as I say, my contradictory Princess is miserable by night and by day.”

However, there is one great mercy in all times of our sorrow and anxiety. God says *how long we shall suffer*, and no man can make the trial a moment longer. After nine days had passed, Count Vasil returned suddenly to his home. He came like a bringer of good tidings. His great black horses flew over the frozen ground, tossing their long manes, and jingling their many bells, as if they knew there was a happy heart behind them. It was

the noon hour, and Theodora was sitting with her aunt. Both heard the arrival, and both instantly sat attent, with every sense strained to listen. Neither was able to utter a word. The Countess dropped the novel she was reading upon the floor. Theodora rose to her feet, reached the middle of the room, and then stood still. All the life she had was set to that moment. Both heard the rapid footsteps coming nearer and nearer. Then the door was flung impetuously open, and the face of the Count shed an instant sense of success and of happiness.

He stretched out his arms and caught the trembling, fainting child to his breast. He kissed her tenderly, and said words to her that made her sob for joy. Then the world seemed to be turning round with her, to be slipping away from under her feet; she heard her aunt's voice at an immense distance; all was unintelligible, void, and dark.

When she recovered consciousness, Count and Countess Vasil and Matrina were at her side, and a physician stood by the stove. She had been ill for three hours. The poor child was troubled at her weakness, she was full of apologies, she felt as if she had been very selfish; for nothing had been done yet to make Michael equally happy, and three hours were gone. She was glad to hear her uncle ask her, "Can you talk a little now, my child?"

Her white, shining face, full of eager anxiety, answered him. He dismissed the physician and Matrina. He took her hands and spoke thus, —

"Theodora, you may now say, '*Glory to God!*' The man Kergoff was easily found, and with very little persuasion he made a clean confession. He also produced all the confederates in the wicked plot which sent your poor parents to shame and to Siberia. I laid, with haste,

the whole testimony before the Czar. He heard my story with the greatest pity and anger. He immediately issued orders for the honorable release of the Prince and Princess Bazaroff, and also for the arrest of Prince Sergius Bazaroff. Listen! it is even possible that your dear father and mother will be *here* for Christmas; and oh, my little one, will not that be a Christmas festival?"

"My uncle, I have become dumb nearly. My heart is so full of happiness there is no room for words in it. I cannot tell you what I feel—I feel to my finger tips."

"My child," whispered the Countess, as she kissed Theodora fervently, "now we shall keep a great Christmas,—a very fine old Russian Christmas! Will not that make you very happy?"

"As you please, dear aunt. I know not Christmas. I have forgotten Christmas. Christmas came not to Bazaroff.

My uncle Sergius said, we were the children of traitors, and unworthy to be counted among the faithful."

"The poor child! Count, what say you? Shall we not keep a children's Christmas, this glad year?"

"I am of your mind, my Countess. However, my good news is not all told yet. As you know, there is a festival before Christmas, the Day of St. Nicholas, the fête day of our Emperor; and what think you? our Theodora is bidden to it! Yes, indeed! Theodora is bidden by the words of the Emperor himself."

"Ah! what an honor! What then is intended by such a grace?"

"I will tell you all, and then you must confess that our Czar is a very just man. He said to me, 'Count Vasil, in the presence of my whole Court I ordered the arrest of Prince and Princess Bazaroff. Before the nobles I degraded him. Very well then, it is right that I as publicly

justify and honor him. At the feast of St. Nicholas I will do this act of justice. I will make him a marshal of the Empire. He shall be close to my own person. The ukas shall be written at once, and *you* shall at that public time receive them for him.' ”

“ Well then, what said you ? ”

“ You know, Countess, how sometimes the soul will speak when it is not bidden to speak ; and it was so at this moment. For, without a thought, I answered boldly, ‘ Sire, the little daughter of Prince Ivan Bazaroff is now with me. Permit her to take this great joy and honor from your hand.’ ”

“ And what said the Czar ? ”

“ He smiled with pleasure and answered, ‘ Let it be as you say, Count ; at the feast of St. Nicholas.’ So you see there is only this thing to be done.”

“ It is a great thing for a child to do. How is she to be taught what is neces-

sary? Besides which, remember she has only ten years. Theodora, do you understand? The Czar bids you to his birthday feast. He will justify and honor your parents through you. What will you say or do, my poor child? You will lose your intelligence, you will be afraid."

"Oh, no, aunt! Afraid of the good Czar? Why should I fear him? Is he not my father, also? I think he will be very kind to his little daughter. How happy are the Russian people! They have a great father always ready to defend them. How just our Czar must be! No; I shall not be afraid. Indeed, I shall be most happy to see his face."

"But perhaps he may even speak to you, child; then what will you say? There must certainly be a little speech prepared."

"But why so, aunt? When the heart is full, something always crosses your mind, and you speak."

“But you did not speak to me; you fainted.”

“Ah, my dear uncle, that was because I could not eat or sleep for many days, so my body failed me, not my soul. Now I can eat and sleep, and I shall not fear the good Czar, not in the least.”

“To be sure. Sleep and eat, and be well and strong. There is now nothing to be uneasy about.”

“One other thing, dear uncle; there is Michael,—Michael who is waiting and watching at Bazaroff. Surely some one must go to Michael. I accuse myself that I forgot Michael’s anxiety for those three hours.”

“You are quite right, Theodora. Some one must go at once; some one who knows how to be prudent. How is it to be managed, I wonder?”

“I will tell you, uncle. Before I left Bazaroff, when Mr. Cecil gave me the letter he said, ‘If all goes well, send back

Matrina to Bazaroff. It is safe to tell Matrina, and she will find out a way to let us know, without arousing the suspicions of Prince Sergius. As soon, therefore, as Michael and Mr. Cecil know that Matrina has returned, they will know all is well. Even if she finds no way to speak with Michael, her presence will be a good message to him."

"As for an excuse for her return, I have one ready," said the Count. "There are certain papers regarding the management of the estate which ought to have been sent to the public sequestrator, but which he has failed to deliver. I will write by Matrina, and tell him to return them by her hand. I will write in such a way that even his guilty conscience will suspect nothing."

"Very good, for I tell you, Count, I have no wish for him to escape those officers of justice who will soon overtake him. I desire that he may have the cup of punishment quite full."

“So then Matrina may go *now*, at once, dear aunt? I feel every hour of my own happiness a little burden until Michael is also made happy.”

“Matrina shall go at once. I will give orders about the horses and drivers. You must send for Matrina and make her understand what is to be told and what is to be prevented.”

Matrina answered the bell of her mistress with a listless air. She had become weary of Theodora's apparently unreasonable depression; but when its cause was explained to her, when she understood what a weight of care the child had been carrying without her help and sympathy, she was ashamed and angry at her selfish resentment of the Princess's want of interest in the pleasures and splendors around her. She was overcome with joy also, and eager to do all in her power. “It was a little thing they asked of her,” she said. “She would have wished to be

sent even to Siberia with such glad tidings."

So long before the short daylight was over, Matrina was in a sleigh, flying across the frozen snow, but feeling neither cold nor weariness, because of the great news hidden in her heart. She thought of a hundred ways in which it would be possible to tell Michael; and while she hastened forward on her merciful journey, Theodora was kneeling before the altar in her room, where that night she talked a long time with God.

IV.

“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” — *Psalms lxxxv. 10.*

IT was possible now for the little girl and her aunt to do some shopping, and to look at the many wonders of Moscow. So, for a day or two, they were nearly constantly on the streets, and Theodora saw many things that interested her. Most of all, she was impressed by the pious character of the people. There were little churches or chapels at the corners of every street, and they were all full with worshippers. Indeed, no one, whether they were rich or poor, passed the doors of any church without crossing themselves with a dumb adoration that was very impressive.

“It is certain that the Russians are a very pious people,” said the Countess, with an air of satisfaction; and, indeed, she took Theodora into several churches to make her own devotions. And the child was speechless with amazement and admiration, for in Russia the churches are storehouses of gold and jewels, and they are generally in a blaze of light, with a multitude of burning wax tapers. The splendor, the light, the solemn strains of fine music, the continual chiming of deep-toned bells, the tall grave clergy with their blue eyes and unclipped hair and beards, and their sedate manner of walking that nothing flustered, impressed Theodora with a strange sense of another and a loftier life in the midst of this toiling, commonplace, striving one. She was startled also by the nearness of these two lives, when she suddenly passed from some busy storehouse, alive with eager purchasers of cloths and

silks, into the solemn quiet of some holy church, with its perpetual glory of light and jewels, its silent worship, the limned icons on its walls, the holy relics in its golden shrines, the great crosses shining with priceless gems, and the speechless rapture or triumphant adoration of the worshippers. It was such a different thing from the noisy shouting and the turmoil of the earthly life which surged close to the very church doors, and even made fitful mournful echoes between the *Jubilates* and the *Te Deums*.

To be sure, all the churches faded from her mind when she at last stood within the Kremlin, the citadel and the sanctuary of old Moscow. She was confounded with its mass of little chapels, their cupolas and spires and pinnacles jumbled together. The very outside walls made her speechless with admiration, they were so ribbed and twisted, and wreathed and fluted; so richly inlaid with odd tiles of

every color, glazed and glistening like serpent scales; so adorned and crowned with golden domes, and spires, and crosses.

And then to come suddenly from this still, sacred splendor into the noisy confusion of the *Nijni*, to walk through the great warehouses filled with malachite and lapis-lazuli, was a contrast the sensitive child could not avoid feeling very keenly; and young and ignorant as she was, the treasures of the great empire filled her heart with patriotic admiration. She looked with wonder on the gold and silver work from the Caucasus, cut and chased with all the minute diligence of Asiatics, at the carpets from Turkey, the silk from Persia, the famous shawls from Orenburg; and she went with delight into the fine tea-houses, where white-robed attendants served them with cups of delicious Overland tea with a slice of lemon in it.

All was like an Arabian Night tale to Theodora, who was also charmed with the happy, good-natured look of the working people. "They do not cast down their faces, dear aunt," she cried in a kind of wonder. "They do not seem to be in trouble; at Bazaroff, for instance, the poor people had always tears in their eyes; they were afraid of the lash; they trembled when Uncle Sergius spoke to them. Life was such a great sorrow at Bazaroff."

"It will soon be very different, my little one. You will see! For the Russians are the best natured creatures in the world, easy, contented, and quite happy to work."

"Yet, always, Prince Sergius called them idle and drunken. Even Mr. Cecil said they did not work much."

"What will you have, my dear? The priests make them to keep one hundred and seventy holidays every year, besides

their fast days and their Sundays. How then can they work? We must put the blame where it is right to put it. If the Emperor, who is the great patriarch, would be pleased to consider that so many holidays are very bad, both for the house and the city, and also for the farm, we might have some good of our people, and the saints be none the worse served. If I was a man I should write and speak about it."

"Do people who write really make others think as they do? Why then is there any trouble? Some one should write to the good Emperor always about what is wrong."

"That reminds me, Theodora. It is you, dear child, that will have, maybe, to speak to the Emperor; and we have been looking at this and that, and have quite forgotten your dress, which is a most important affair. Now we will go to Madame Demaines, for you must be

fitted with a costume that will make all eyes turn upon you. And madame will understand precisely what will be the best and the most beautiful."

"Dearest aunt! permit that I wear my Russian dress, the dress that I love and am at my ease in. Matrina has taught me how to wear my saraphan; but in these French dresses I shall be very awkward and miserable."

"But, Theodora, dress is a thing a little girl knows nothing about, and our Emperor knows much about it. I assure you that a pretty costume will make a pretty impression. When people have a favor to ask it is half granted to a well-dressed suppliant."

"But, dear aunt, I shall not look pretty in a French dress. I shall be ungraceful. I shall be troubled by the long skirt. I shall be sick with the tight bands. Permit me to be a Russian girl. I assure you that I will not make my friends

ashamed of my behavior. Often Matrina has told me how to conduct myself when I should come into a great and noble company."

But the Countess was not to be persuaded, and Theodora very reluctantly submitted to the dictation of her aunt and the French modiste. However, when the trial was over, it was over; for at night when the subject was introduced to Count Vasil, he agreed with Theodora in the most decided manner.

"By all means," he said, "let the little one wear our pretty national costume. It is charming on a child so charming; and I am most certain that the Emperor will be pleased, for anything that is Russian goes at once to his heart. Besides, Countess, a new dress is usually most uncomfortable. I, for instance, am always miserable and most constrained in my manner in a new suit of clothes."

"Ta-ta-ta! thou art a man. A woman,

yes, even a little girl, is very different. With a new dress they put on a kind of genius. Do me the favor, Count, to neglect Theodora's dress. It will not be forgotten by me."

"One thing, my Countess, is not to be disputed, the dress must be a Russian dress; as for the materials and the colors, that is well in your judgment, for there is no woman so excellently fitted to judge in such matters."

"It shall, then, be as you say, Count; yet if there should be failure —"

"There will be no failure. The word is not to be used."

"Very well then, Theodora. It is to be the Russian dress. Am I not very complaisant?"

"You are very kind, dearest aunt; and I assure you the Russian dress is the best. At the end you shall confess this is the truth."

The next day they went at a rush to

St. Petersburg, for the feast of St. Nicholas was close at hand. It was a cold, bleak, and very tiresome journey, but the rapid movement, the strange sights and sounds, and her great weariness, made Theodora sleep so much and so heavily that the realities by which she was encompassed fitted into her dreams and became a part of them; and at length they came one day, about the noon hour, in sight of St. Petersburg, squatting like an immense alligator, half in and half out of the water of the Neva swamps.

“Look at our great city, Theodora,” said the Count. “I tell you that I think it modelled on Amsterdam, and not unlike Venice. But, doubtless, some day you will be able to make your own comparisons.”

Theodora raised herself and looked eagerly down the miles and miles of “Prospects,” the endless, wide-open

spaces, the long streets, the lines of walls, the rows of trees, and the interminable avenues.

“There seems to be no end of them, uncle,” she said wearily.

“My dear, you must know that these unending avenues have a purpose; they permit the town to run out of town. It is a most necessary arrangement. But here is the end of our journey. Alight, little one! You are at home. May you be happy.”

They were entering a noble palace as he spoke, going up a broad staircase of Carrara marble, lined with servants wearing powdered wigs and gay liveries in the style of the old French Court. The rooms were more spacious and more lofty than those of the Moscow palace, and more richly adorned with malachite, jasper, and lapis-lazuli. A constant stir and movement filled the place, and the champing and neighing of the horses

could be heard from the fine stables but a little distance away.

Theodora's heart filled and swelled to the sense of all this vivid life. She felt the influx of new motives and of new hopes. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes gleamed; she was spiritually "possessed" by the ideas which had just come into her experience. And yet, this feeling of exaltation was dashed and darkened by the sombre recollections of her beloved brother. How sad was the life her dear Michael was leading! How real were all its terrors and sufferings! How unreal and shadowy and uncertain its hopes! She could feel how long the days must be to the hearts watching at Bazaroff, and, thinking of these things, she herself trembled with impatience. Yes, indeed, very often, both when in society and in solitude, her tender heart cried out impatiently, "Oh, that the Feast of St. Nicholas were here! When will it arrive? Every hour is a whole year long!"

But at last whatever is waited for comes. The great day dawned. Theodora rose in a strangely quiet, solemn mood. She stood a moment and looked at her new costume; it satisfied her desires, and she turned quickly from it and went to her altar. There she prostrated herself for a long time before the God who says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." She put her small hand in his hand and prayed, "Lead thou me in the way I should go. I am so ignorant, guide me with thy counsel. I am only a little child. Thou art the Lord God omnipotent. I am am not afraid of thee, O my God, why then should I fear the Czar, who is but thy servant?"

In such prayer all the day long she strengthened her heart in God, and as the hours went by she became calm and self-possessed, almost happy. She had lost all fear, and when her maids came

to robe her for the great interview she rose with a smile and began to take a great interest in her adornment. She said softly to herself, what her aunt had said to her, "So much depends upon a pretty dress. I must remember that to-night; I dress myself for my dear father and mother and Michael."

Certainly in no French dress could she have looked more lovely. Her saraphan was of white satin embroidered with gold, and it had sleeves of glistening Indian gauze. Her shoes were of white satin trimmed with sapphires, and round her head she wore a coronal of the same heaven-blue gems; and never before had her personal beauty been so remarkable. It was impossible not to be charmed with her sweet, childlike face, and large wondering blue eyes. Her complexion was like that of a lily. She was tall and slender, and as she walked she seemed to fill the air with

fragrance and grace as a swaying flower does. Her carriage was noble and erect, her air that of the most innocent confidence. "She is like an angel," said her uncle Vasil. And, indeed, when a young girl has a beautiful body, transfigured by a beautiful soul, oh, how lovely and lovable she is!

And so sure was she of her angel's presence, and of the blessing and approval of God, that she did not feel the least fear when she entered the magnificent palace of the great Czar. The blaze of light and of gold and jewels, the splendid uniforms of the men, the beautiful dresses of the women, the quantity of radiant flowers, the stirring music of the military bands, all these things appeared to be the fit and proper surroundings of her mood of exaltation; as proper as the sunshine is for the blooming rose.

So she glided along between her uncle and aunt Vasil as if she were in a dream,

quite unconscious that the very presence of a little girl in that august assembly was in itself a very strange and wonderful thing, and was causing a great curiosity among the various princes and marshals, and dukes and duchesses, gathered in the throne-room.

Perhaps all this human interest and curiosity might have been an annoying and weakening influence if she had had to bear it for any great length of time, but she had not. A very few minutes passed, and then the Emperor and Empress entered together. Theodora's eyes were instantly fixed upon the Emperor. His impressive figure, majestic with the air of empire, his potent face, on which *will* sat enthroned, fascinated her child heart. Her first and instantaneous thought was, "This is the mighty Czar who has given me back father and mother and home! This is he who has ransomed those I love from such great suffering and

degradation.” And at that moment she would have willingly died for him.

There was an intense stillness as the Emperor bowed to his assembled nobles. Then he said a few words to a gray old marshal, who was covered with medals and honorable “orders,” and the marshal stepped forward and said in a loud, clear voice, —

“Nobles and Brothers of the Russian Empire: It has been fully proven that the Prince Ivan Bazaroff was falsely accused. It is therefore the gracious pleasure of the Emperor, on this, his own fête day, to restore to Prince Ivan Bazaroff all his civil rights and his large estates; and, also, the Emperor declares his conviction of Prince Ivan Bazaroff’s love and loyalty, by making him grand marshal of the Emperor’s own guard. The ukase relating to these changes is declared.”

There was a quick sound of inarticulate rejoicing, a stir of happiness not to

be expressed, an indefinable sense of happy expectation; and then Count Vasil spoke to Theodora, and she walked straight to the Emperor. Her beauty and grace delighted every eye; and the ecstasy of love and gratitude which filled her heart produced in her an unconscious elevation, preventing all fear or faltering. A low murmur of admiration followed the child. She had been told to cast herself at the feet of the Czar. She did not think of that. On the contrary, she raised her eyes to his face.

“My child!” he said kindly.

“*My Czar! My Czar!*” and forgetting all else in that supreme moment of her desire, she stretched out her arms, and lifted her face to his face as if he were indeed her father.

The action was so genuine and spontaneous that it compelled its own answer, and a thrill of sympathy stirred the great company when the Emperor stooped and

kissed the tears from the little one's wet eyelids. Then the Empress also kissed her, and the grand measure of the polonaise struck up, and the nobles formed themselves for its march; but Theodora knew not anything more, distinctly, until she found herself in the Vasil carriage, crying softly in her aunt's arms; crying for very joy.

V.

“Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born king!”

“At Christmas, play and make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.”

THEODORA was now the heroine of the hour. Nobles and peasants alike talked of nothing but the beautiful child and the great Emperor's justice and kindness. Hundreds of curious people passed the Vasil palace, only for the hope of seeing Theodora at some of its windows; and the reception-rooms of the Countess were crowded with very great ladies, who were delighted to speak to the little girl and to kiss her cheek. As they drank the tea, which Russians drink at all hours, they talked of the circumstance.

“The Emperor was delighted,” said the

Grand Duchess Olga. "No doubt that is the truth; many who were watching saw the tears come to his eyes. Thanks be to God for so good a Czar! May his presence always enlighten and comfort us!"

"You should have seen the little one's face," added the wife of a rich boyar. "I was behind the Czar, and therefore I could see it. The face was wonderful. It was all light. Her eyes shone like two great stars. Her lips were parted, she stretched out her hands, and when they touched the Czar's neck he stooped down, and—it is the truth—*he kissed her!* Yes, indeed! the great Czar kissed the child."

"I think, indeed, it was the Czar who kissed the child," said another noble lady, "though, to be sure, others say the child had the noble daring to kiss first the lips of the Czar. But there was the kiss! whichever way—from, or to—there it was! About the kiss itself, there could be no mistake."

“And I,” said the Duchess Sophia, “I, who have the honor to be in waiting on the Empress, I know that she also was delighted. The Empress also kissed the little one, and there were tears in her eyes. I saw them, and I gave to the Empress a kerchief that she might dry them away. For, to be sure, the Empress loved the child’s mother, the poor Princess Nadia.”

“That is quite another matter,” said the Countess Vasil. She did not wish to bring into discussion the affairs of her sister — her wrongs or her sufferings. Such things are dangerous to talk about; and she turned suddenly round and called Theodora to her side.

The child was almost frightened at the adulation and the praises she received. She had done nothing at all but thank the good Czar, because he had so nobly and publicly justified her dear father and mother. And since they were not guilty,

surely they were worthy of such justice ! Indeed, her childish mind had been speculating as to what recompense ought to be given for so much unmerited shame and suffering. The question gave a troubled, thoughtful air to her young face, and the Duchess Olga noticed the expression, and told her she must no longer be anxious.

“It is even possible that the Princee and Princess, your father and mother, are free at this moment, that they are hastening to clasp you in their arms. Indeed, as there is only happiness and honor before them, little one, I think you ought to be very joyful. Also, you know, one must always be gay at the Christmas feast. It is indeed a sin to let our faces cast a shadow on those blessed days. Your angel would not approve of it. I wish you a joyful Christmas, little lady.”

And now Theodora began to see and to hear so much about Christmas that she was full of curiosity and expectation.

Mr. Cecil had often read to her the story of the Babe of Bethlehem, and it had rested on her mind like dawn upon the waters. But to honor Christ's birthday, to see, to feel, to share in its joy, that was a wonderful thing to the child! She was going to keep her first Christmas feast! She was full of the joy of it! She had never been so happy in her life.

And it really seemed to be a different world, every one was so good-natured, so merry, so busy, on such tiptoes of expectation! For surely the river of life which runs past Christmas day is not the same river which runs past all the other days of the year. The stir, the happy confusion, the very possibility that her father and mother might arrive during the feast, gave a sense of triumph and exaltation to all the preparations.

One thing only troubled the happy family. Nothing had been heard from Bazaroff. Officers of justice had certainly

been sent there, but there was no public information as to how their errand had been performed, no word from Michael or Mr. Cecil. And Theodora could not induce her uncle and aunt to talk about Prince Sergius and Bazaroff. Their silence was a very prudent one, for in Russia it is a dangerous thing to speak of state offences; there might be a spy in their own household, their words might be falsely reported; no matter what they felt, Christmas was the safest of all subjects to talk about, and while they were keeping the great feast, affairs more personal would very likely be righting themselves.

However, the night before the Nativity there came a messenger from Bazaroff. He brought a letter from Mr. Cecil, saying that Prince Sergius had disappeared, and that it was considered best for Michael to remain at Bazaroff.

“But why?” cried Theodora. “I

thought you had sent for Michael, dear uncle! I do not want to keep Christmas without Michael and Mr. Cecil and Matrina. I am very much disappointed."

"Michael is nobler and more unselfish than you are, Theodora," answered the Count. "He has doubtless considered that your father and mother may come first of all to Bazaroff, and that they will indeed be lonely and disappointed if there is no one there to welcome them back to their home. Indeed, this is what Michael says: 'I am waiting at Bazaroff to meet here my father and mother, and this is my Christmas joy, dear uncle.' You must remember, Theodora, that Prince Sergius has fled, and that Mr. Cecil is with your brother. The sorrow has gone away from Bazaroff; they will be very happy there. Indeed, I think that Michael has done exactly right."

"And Theodora," said the Countess, "must now forget everything but Christ-

mas and its great joy. Come, my child, it is necessary that you also should do something for Christmas, or else you cannot expect to find its gladness in your heart."

There was, indeed, a great deal for every one to do. The house was full of servants, but they needed constant direction, for they were more disposed to enjoy the feast than to prepare for it. The Countess herself gave the various orders, and Theodora went with her from room to room as the illumination was prepared.

For when the night began to fall upon the big city, it put on its festival garments and appearance. The chiming of bells, the fanfare of trumpets, the happy stir of human life and gladness, enthused the crowds upon the public streets, and every house was full of lights, according to its size and ability. In Count Vasil's palace there were two thousand wax candles burning, and whenever one servant met another they said to each other, with an



He taunted the children with their parents' degradation.

air of solemn gladness, "*God with us!*" It was the same in the markets and the churches, on the prospects and on the highways, around the poor man's stove, or among the nobles in the Emperor's palace, every one had the same glad message to give his fellow, "*God with us!*"

The Countess Vasil had invited forty youths and maidens to keep Christmas with Theodora, and as soon as the candles were lighted they made a procession through the brilliant rooms, singing all together the sweet old chant of "Kolyda," which is the song of the Nativity:—

"Kolyda! Kolyda!
Kolyda has arrived!
On the eve of the Nativity
We went about, we sought
Holy Kolyda.
We found Kolyda
In Peter's court.
Round Peter's court there is an iron fence,
In the midst of the court
There are three rooms;
In the first room is the bright moon;
In the second room is the red sun;
In the third room the many stars."

This song, though now consecrated to Christmas, was once the song of the sun god, and in some parts of Russia, even at this day, a young girl dressed to represent the sun is driven from house to house, while the girls attending her sing joyfully the "Kolyadki."

Theodora and her companions sang it through every room of Count Vasil's palace, and all up and down the brilliantly lighted staircase, and a very pretty procession the forty children in their rich saraphans made.

"Indeed they look like a band of fairies," said the English lady who was present.

"Have you ever seen a fairy?" asked the Countess Vasil; and the English lady shook her head and answered, —

"No; they have all gone away from England. It is said they were frightened by the coming of mills and machinery, and the dreadful shrieks of the railway engine."

“Ah, no!” said Theodora, with such a pretty air of confidence, “that was not the reason. Mr. Cecil, who is a very learned man, told me the fairies were all Roman Catholics, and that when England became Protestant they very quickly left the country. By this we may know —

‘They were of the old profession;
Their songs were *Ave Maries*;
Their dances were processions.’”

Then the English lady laughed merrily, and the Countess said it was Christmas, and “Kolyda” was a house song for every one, Catholic or Protestant, for the sun and the moon represented the father and the mother of a family, and the stars were the little children, and the chorus was only a wish for “their very good health.”

It was a children’s Christmas that Count and Countess Vasil intended to keep for Theodora, and the twenty fair maidens, and the youths who were their “elected,” spent the evening in singing,

in games, and in telling each other legends and stories of the days of advent. And when all the fathers and mothers of the boys and girls had arrived, then they marched through the house again, singing joyfully,—

“Kolyda! Kolyda!
Kolyda has arrived!
Glory to God in heaven! Glory!”

Then the children sat down to eat together, and to plan amusements for the holy days between the Nativity and the Epiphany; for during these days they were to be “dear companions.” And every day was set apart for something delightful—sleighing, skating, ball playing in the court, dancing in the house, and, above all, for those exquisite singing games, which are the greatest pleasure of Russian boys and girls.

Theodora was enchanted. She remembered the sad hours of the previous Christmas, when Prince Sergius had drunk

so deeply, and scolded so furiously, that every one else in Bazaroff had lived in silence and terror. This happy company, and the sense of perfect love around her, made her weep for very joy; and long after the other children had gone to sleep, Theodora lay wide awake, full of gratitude, and of a sense of hope and expectation that would not permit her to forget the past.

Very early on Christmas morning the Countess herself came into the great rooms where the little girls slept. "Awake! awake!" she cried; "and tell me now what have you dreamt, and what has appeared to you in your sleep."

And as they rubbed their pretty drowsy eyes, and began all to talk together, the *babuschka*, an old woman who in every house waits on the young girls, brought in their breakfasts. Then their own nurses and maids began to come in, and to ask how they were, and

to listen to their dreams, and to give and to take messages to their parents and to the Countess Vasil, so that the breakfast was full of merry interruptions.

After being dressed they went to the court, where they passed the day in a game of snow-balling, in sleighing, skating, and in watching the arrival of very distinguished guests who were coming to the Christmas dinner. These they delighted to greet with some Kolyadki chant. To be sure, as the day went on, they grew a little wild with their pleasure; but the great Christmas dinner, with all its grand company and formalities, easily brought them back to their best conduct and behavior.

For when the two thousand wax candles were again lit, the rooms were full of great ladies flashing with jewels, and great nobles flashing with civil and military orders, and handsome boys in

their rich fur pelisses and embroidered kaftans, and beautiful girls in saraphans of silk and gauze, with their flowing hair tied back with rose-colored ribbons. And in every room there was music, and in some rooms the boys and girls were singing to it, and in others they were dancing. Such joyful groups! Such gorgeous, good-natured ladies and gentlemen! All giving way a little to the wishes of the children at this time, because of *the Child* whose birthday they were keeping.

Try now to imagine Count Vasil's banqueting hall with its soft lights, its glad music, and its two long tables bright with gold and silver, and sweet with many-colored flowers. One table was for the children, and the other for the nobles and their ladies. The Christmas feast is laid on both tables, the rich viands are filling the air with delicious aromas; but before any one may taste of the good things, Count Vasil rises, and all the

company rise with him, and they sing heartily together the Christmas song that all Russia is that day singing from Poland to Siberia, the “Song of the Bread and the Salt”:—

“ May the bread and the salt, *Slawa!* (glory!)
 Live a thousand years! *Slawa!*
 May our Emperor live still longer! *Slawa!*
 May his dear children
 Ever remain faithful! *Slawa!*
 May our good Emperor never grow old! *Slawa!*
 May his good courser
 Never be tired! *Slawa!*
 May his shining garments
 Ever be new! *Slawa!*”

Then amid rippling waves of laughter and conversation the feast began; and the children, of course, finished their dinner long before their parents and the stately company who sat round Count Vasil's table. For these guests had a long *menu* to go through; and they had “healths” to drink, and speeches to make, and they liked to do all these things very leisurely.

But the children thought it would be much more delightful to play games than to sit in the banqueting hall, where they had also to talk with propriety, and in a voice not too loud. So Theodora looked at her aunt, and the Countess nodded and smiled, and then, without hurry, but still very gladly, she arose from the table, and the children followed her into the large room which had been appointed for the "Jewel Game."

An old woman was just bringing in a deep dish half full of clean water. She placed it upon a table, which was covered with a clean cloth. Another woman brought in bread and salt, and three pieces of charcoal. Then the boys and girls stood up, and removed their rings and chains and bracelets, and walking to the bowl they dropped them into it; and as they did so, they chanted again the "Song of the Bread and the Salt," while the old woman stirred the jewels in

the clean water, and covered them with a napkin.

Now for the "Jewel Game" there are many songs; one foretells good fortune; a second, a journey; a third, sickness; others great wealth, high honors, good marriage, many misfortunes, etc., etc., etc. All these different songs are written on separate cards, and the old woman who presides, while she lifts a jewel out of the water, draws also a card from the pack. Both are taken at random, and without any plan or design, and whatever song is on the card drawn is sung by the company. Then the jewel which has been lifted to it is examined, and the song sung is said to be prophetic of the fate of the owners of the jewel.

If the jewel be a ring, or a bracelet, or locket, while it is slipped on the finger, or clasped round the arm or the throat, all the company sing in chorus,—

“To her for whom we have sung it,
May it turn good;
She who has missed it
Must do without it,—
Must do without it.
This cannot fail.”

Many of the youths and their “fair companions” had their fate thus predicted, and at last the old woman said, —

“I have lifted a card. I have taken a jewel. On the card is the song for a happy marriage. Will our gracious Princess Theodora predict it?”

Then Theodora, who had quickly learnt all the songs, began to chant. Her voice had the shrill sweetness of girlhood, and she pronounced the words very clearly, which in itself makes singing delightful: —

“ I saw a sparrow-hawk
Fly from one lane,
And a little dove
Fly out from another;
They flew to each other,
They embraced each other;

Embraced each other
With their light blue wings.
And the people wondered,
The people marvelled,
That sparrow-hawk and dove
Should build so happily,
So happily together. *Slawa.*"

And to be sure when the jewel was uncovered, it was found to be the bracelet of Theodora, and her companions clasped it round her arm, singing merrily, —

"To her for whom we have sung it,
May it turn good!
She who has missed it,
Must do without it, —
Must do without it,
This cannot fail."

As the last jewel was a ring, the old woman rolled it along the floor, and the children watched its course with great interest; for if it is the ring of a girl, and it rolls to the door, she will be married very early; and if it is the ring of a youth, then he is sure to be a great traveller, and go many long journeys.

And every one laughed and clapped their hands when the ring went to the door and was found to be the ring of little Paul Kieff, who was going, as all knew, to Paris as soon as the Epiphany was over.

On the following night they danced a little while, but Theodora liked the song-games far better; and the other children also said, "That though the mazurka was indeed charming, it was not so much so as the 'Burial of the Gold.'"

"Come, companions, then," cried Theodora, "let us bury the gold and silver!" So they stood in a circle, and they placed Theodora in the middle of the circle, and they took her gold ring and bid her find out in whose hand it was, as they passed it from one to the other, singing as they did so, —

"See here! Gold I bury!
Silver pure I bury!
In the rooms,
The rooms of my father.

Rooms so high! rooms so high
Of my mother!
Guess, O maiden!
Find out, pretty one,
Whose hand is holding
The wings of the serpent! "

Then Theodora sung in answer, —

" Gladly would I guess,
Had I known,
Had I seen,
Crossing the plain,
Plaiting my ruddy brown hair,
Weaving it with silk,
Interlacing it with gold;
Oh! my dear companions,
Tell me the truth!
Do not conceal it,
Give me, oh, give me,
Give me back my gold! "

To which entreaty the circle of girls
answered thus, —

" The ring has fallen,
The ring has fallen,
Among the Guelder roses;
Among the raspberries;
Among the black currants;
Disappeared has the gold,
Hidden away,
Mere dust,
All grown over with moss! "

And though these songs sound only like pretty nonsense, the Russian child knows that they hold a meaning; that the gold ring represents the sun, hidden away by winter's dark clouds. For this game, like the Saxon one of "Hunt the Slipper," and many other kindred ones of other nations, was doubtless once a solemn emblematical rite.

According to Russian traditions, all kinds of hidden treasures may be revealed at this period of the year, in the "holy evenings" between the Nativity and the Epiphany. "Many wonderful things happen then," said the old woman, "for the Christ walks upon the earth, and gives to the sorrowful ones help and comfort, and to the wicked some opportunity to repent."

"And that is truly so," said little Elizabeth Jelko, in a solemn voice. "I know that it is so, for my uncle Volknoff was once a great miser. And on the

sixth holy night as he was going past the church of St. Basil he met an old man, an old, old man, who said to him, —

“‘Volknoff, I pray thee stay for Christ’s sake, and give me a copeck, or at least a morsel of bread.’

“And at once the heart of my uncle Volknoff felt pitiful, and he said softly, though he was wont to speak gruff and cross, ‘For Christ’s sake, then, my brother, take then this silver ruble.’ And instantly the beggar was gone; but Volknoff saw for a moment a face like an angel’s, and he knew that the Christ had spoken to him. And, indeed, he has not loved gold more than Christ since that night; and now, also, he is a devout worshipper at the church of St. Basil.”

And after Elizabeth had spoken, each girl had some story of the same holy time to tell. One knew of a very cruel noble who, on the third holy night, had suddenly taken pity on a miserable slave child. It

looked at him only as he passed it, and the sorrowful eyes turned the master's hard heart to tears; and he spoke gently to the little sufferer, and then he found he had spoken to the Christ-child.

"Besides which," said Lucia Smoloff, "I knew a man who was going on his business across the great plain of the Volga. It was on the eve of the Epiphany, and he was a very good man. But as he drove on in the moonlight he was followed by a pack of fierce wolves; and he gave up his life, for they were already pulling at his robes. But just then what happened? A stranger came into the sledge, and he said to the hungry brutes, '*Depart!*' And they slunk silently away, and the man cried out, '*My Christ! it is thee, then!*'"

"And it is not only this earth that is then blessed," continued little Peter Rigoff. "It is also in heaven a time of great happiness. My uncle, who is a

patriarch, told me that even in heaven, during these holy days, there are great gifts and rejoicings. The doors of the radiant realm of paradise, in which the Son dwells, are flung wide open, new treasures are disclosed, the waters turn to wine, the trees of life put forth fresh blossoms, the fruits of heaven ripen on the boughs, and the ministering angels receive new gifts for the children of men."

Thus they sat talking after they were wearied with their games, and were more sweetly, solemnly happy than any laughter or dancing could make them, until their servants came to prepare them for sleep. Then they went away to holy dreams, with a smile for each other, and a little prayer to the Redeemer in every sinless heart.

VI.

“To love something more than one’s self, that is the secret of all that is great. To know how to live for others, that is the aim of all noble souls.”

EVEN little children, if they will take the trouble to observe, may easily see how different a thing life is to every single human being. Not even to two of the same family is it precisely the same; each has his or her own task to learn, or duty to perform. Thus Michael and Theodora, though the children of the same father and mother, were very differently situated at this Christmastide.

While Theodora was being caressed and praised beyond her understanding, while she was surrounded by luxuries and many splendid amusements, little Michael was living amid hatred and un-

reasonable anger, and obliged to endure the deepest sense of fear and anxiety.

As soon as Theodora had left Bazaroff with her aunt, there was an access of all the wretchedness Michael had hitherto suffered. Prince Sergius was undoubtedly very uneasy about the loss of his letter; and his sudden appearances in the school-room, and his unlooked-for interruptions, showed that his suspicions were on the alert. But for some time he did not speak of his loss, or make any public effort to discover the missing paper.

He did not remember where he had last handled the fateful thing. He had been so furious with strong brandy and ungovernable rage that he had no distinct memory as to the time or place. The only particular clear to him was the fact that he had put it into an inner and separate receptacle of his leather pocket-wallet on the day when it had been first brought to him.

Until Kergoff's visit he had never again looked at the insolent message. He was sure of that. The point at which he wavered was a very important one,—he could not remember whether he had opened this special receptacle while the man was with him. In his own mind he had promised to give Kergoff a lash for every word if ever he dared to put his feet within the great gates of Bazaroff court. But, somehow, Kergoff had been to Bazaroff and had bullied him out of a large sum of money, and he had also gone away unpunished. How had such a thing happened?

“I must have been drunk,—blind, and deaf, and dumb drunk,” he said to his own angry heart, “because I am not a coward when I am sober. And if I had been sober, Kergoff would have tasted the knout he so impudently and unpardonably promised me,—promised Prince Sergius Bazaroff! That I per-

mitted such insolence to go unpunished is incredible! *I myself* was from home when Kergoff brought his detestable person here, that is certain. But the paper! The infamous letter he sent! What did I do with it?"

He asked himself this question night and day. He wandered about the wood in which he had walked with Kergoff, looking vainly for the bit of white paper on the waste of white snow. Finally he set every serf on the estate to hunt for it. "It was a note promising a large sum of money," he told them, "and he would give freedom to whoever found it for him."

This great promise sharpened every eye, but no one could find at Bazaroff what was already at St. Petersburg, and at last the search was abandoned. Every inch of ground had been carefully gone over, and though here and there scraps of written paper had been found, they

proved, when brought to the Prince's notice, utterly worthless.

The whole palace, and especially the schoolroom, was subjected to the same radical search. Indeed Mr. Cecil, having been told by Prince Sergius that the loss regarded a large sum of money, demanded a strict search of the apartments he occupied. Sergius protested his perfect confidence in Mr. Cecil's integrity. He said he would not subject a gentleman to such an indignity ; but really he did suspect Michael. The boy had bad parents. He was a bad boy. He was sure he was quite capable of theft, therefore he would search Michael's room and clothing.

The boy submitted to this indignity without a word. He was afraid if he opened his mouth he would receive the lash ; and if Prince Sergius degraded him so far, he knew that his heart would break. And now it was only to be

patient a little longer, a few more days. So he stood up, pale and speechless, while his uncle made the serfs turn his poor belongings over and over. He said not a word when the clothes he wore were stripped from him and examined inch by inch. He was silently praying for patience and strength; and Mr. Cecil stood by his side, and warned and supported him in ways unseen and unsuspected by his tormentor. Even when no trace of the paper was discovered, the Prince found it impossible to dismiss his fear and suspicion. His heart told him *that the letter had been found.*

Every day he became more frantically brutal. The sharp, never-to-be-mistaken sound of the lash cracked upon the frosty air every day; and the cries of the slaves, tortured for the most trifling offences, made Mr. Cecil and Michael sick and dumb with terror. Both felt that they were in the power of a madman. Several

times they fled from his approach, and remained in hiding until he had drunk himself into insensibility. The days were terrible; the nights still more so; even Mr. Cecil wept sometimes,—wept with that sad impatience which feels that its misery comes from the neglect of those it has trusted.

For why did no one come to their relief? Count Vasil must know that, as soon as Prince Sergius discovered the loss of the letter, their lives would be intolerable, and not even safe. He regretted now that he had not gone himself with the Countess Vasil back to St. Petersburg. He would have moved heaven and earth ere this for Michael's relief. Theodora and her aunt had so many womanly pleasures! They would not hurry, or press the matter.

Then, again, they assured themselves of Theodora's love. She knew all they would suffer. Was it likely she would

take any pleasure while they were in mortal peril? Could her own safety make their misery to be forgotten? No, no! a thousand times no! Michael was as sure of his sister's love and fidelity as he was of his own existence.

One afternoon, after fifteen days of this anxiety, Mr. Cecil said to Michael, "My dear boy, we must try and escape. Death is better than such a life of terror. I have a pair of pistols. I will load them well. If we are overtaken, what shall I do, Michael?"

"If you love me, dear teacher, slay me. Suffer them not to touch me. My uncle will bring me back and flog me to death. A bullet through my heart will be a great mercy."

Mr. Cecil drew the child to his breast and wept bitterly. But he whispered, "You are quite right, Michael. We cannot fall into the hands of Prince Sergius. It will be far better to trust to the love

of the Merciful One. Still, it is only in extremity that we must dare such an act. I still believe that God, the hearer of prayer, will send us help."

"But if it comes to the worst, how shall we escape? Without a swift horse and a sledge, the idea is an impossible one."

"I know. Last night, after you slept, I went down-stairs. Your uncle Sergius was insensible; the serfs were sleeping or drinking; no one noticed me as I passed through the house and went to the stables. It is true, the dogs growled, but I spoke to them and they recognized my voice and were satisfied. Your uncle's own horse and sledge will be most convenient. The sledge is an extremely light one; the horses are swifter than any other in this district."

"But there are men in the stables all night long?"

"There were two hostlers on duty, but

they were so drunken that I easily filled two bags with oats and hid them away; for we must take food for the horses with us, as we shall not dare to stop at any inn within a hundred miles of Bazaroff."

"Yes, sir, I understand."

"And for ourselves, also, I have put aside some bread and meat. But until it is surely necessary to save life, we will not run away: if that pinch comes then, my dear Michael, it will be our duty to fly."

"All seems possible, dear teacher, that you have planned, if the servants in the stable should be in a deep sleep; but if they should awaken, what then?"

"I alone will enter the stable. If the men awake, I shall say, 'This is a case of life and death. The Prince is insensible. I am going for help. Haste with the swiftest horses and a sledge.'"

"The men may go at once to Prince Sergius."

“We shall not leave until the Prince is unconscious; and when he does awaken, they will fear to be the first to tell him. They will hesitate and consult and lose much time.”

“Then, perhaps, the poor men may suffer in our place.”

“I am glad you thought of that possibility, Michael. It shows you have a kind and considerate heart. I have also thought of that likelihood and made some inquiries. The men will not suffer. It is the habit of the servants to excuse all their faults by asserting that they came to Prince Sergius about any wrong matter, and that they found him too ‘busy’ to listen to their information, or to give them any orders. And the Prince knows that ‘busy’ is a considerate way of saying ‘drunk,’ and he is prudent enough to reflect that the estate would soon be in chaos if he punished the servants for his own drunkenness.”

“I wish, then, that God would visit us here, or even one of the least of his holy angels. Why does not help come? Has God forgotten to be gracious? I think that this house is like hell. Perhaps, indeed, no good angel can enter it.”

“Though we make our bed in hell, even there God is with us; and thou knowest, Michael, that in the valley of the shadow of death he has promised to comfort us. It is true, I have been talking to thee, poor little one, of running away; but indeed I surely think the God of salvation will visit us here.”

Then there fell a great silence between them. It was snowing heavily outside, and it was dreary and chill beyond expression within the large desolate dwelling. Suddenly there was a faint, unusual noise,—the noise of a far-off sledge, and the soft tinkle of the bells, and the beat of the horse’s feet on the frozen snow, came nearer and nearer. Michael

rose and went to one of the windows overlooking the court. The vehicle was just entering the gate. He turned like a flash and touched the master, who was bending disconsolately over the stove.

“Master! Master! Here is Matrina at last! Thank God!”

“Thank God, Michael! Remember, my boy, what Matrina’s simple presence here means. It means that the letter is delivered; that all is well; that God has visited us in our affliction! When did he ever break his promise? When did he ever forsake those who trust in him? Jehovah is a *very present* help in time of trouble.”

He kept softly repeating such blessed promises, and Michael’s heart echoed them, but further they could not talk. They had passed beyond speech. They were listening and waiting; and hour after hour went by and there was no change. Michael’s face settled hopelessly.

“I have been mistaken,” he said. “I will go to bed. To sleep a little while and to forget, that is all now possible.”

He was interrupted by the faint echo of a voice singing. The sound was unusual; the voice was *Matrina's*. She was singing to let them know of her presence. But ere they could certainly say, “It is *Matrina* singing,” they heard Prince Sergius speak in an angry tone. A door was violently closed, and the singing ceased.

“Nevertheless, *it is Matrina*,” said Mr. Cecil. “Go to bed, my dear Michael. I will watch for her visit. She will come when Prince Sergius has lost the power to prevent her coming.”

Mr. Cecil was right. Towards the midnight *Matrina* softly opened the school-room door. Her face spoke the glad tidings before her tongue. Mr. Cecil called Michael very softly, and the boy came. *Matrina* took him in her arms.

“We are all saved, my Prince!” she said. “The letter has been read by the Czar himself. The ukase making the most noble Prince Ivan a grand marshal of the Empire is given already, and the officers of justice to arrest Prince Sergius follow quickly in my footsteps. A few days—even a few hours—and the trouble will have gone away forever!”

She spoke rapidly, throwing her hands downward with every word; and her face, though but the flat, plain face of a Russian peasant, was irradiated with a great light from her rejoicing heart.

“Why have you kept us waiting so long, Matrina? To-night I went to bed broken-hearted.”

“Ah, my little one, could I help it? Prince Sergius, having read the letter which I brought from Count Vasil, suddenly turned very suspicious. ‘It is a little thing the Count sends you back for,’ he said, with a frown. ‘Is this all?’

Speak thou and speak the truth, or the lash shall whip it out of thee.’ ”

“How did you then pacify him?”

“I said, ‘It is not quite all, my Prince. I was very miserable in the great city. I wished to come back to my companions. The Count Vasil said there was a call for the papers, and it would be well for you to prepare them.’ ”

“‘But then,’ he asked, ‘why a call now, after all these years? It is most unlikely.’ Then he questioned me very sharply about the lost letter, and I was afraid.”

“O Matrina! You surely did not tell?”

“How could you think it possible? No, no! I declared most truly that I saw no such paper at Bazaroff. He asked me if the Countess Vasil was his enemy, and I answered that in my presence she had not spoken of him, either good or bad. But he is uneasy, and he

has been drinking hard. In the morning he will be a monster; there is no doubt of that."

"But," said Mr. Cecil, "there are ten hours ere he will come to himself, and in ten hours God may bring many good things to pass. While we are sleeping, those who are appointed to come will come swiftly."

And Matrina answered, "I will now go away, because my orders from Prince Sergius were strict in this matter. He said, 'If thou but speak to the boy Michael, or give him the least sign or message, I will make thee to weep for it to thy dying day.' See, then, in what danger I am."

So Matrina went away, and Michael and Mr. Cecil put out the solitary candle and sat in the dark, whispering comfort to each other. They could not sleep, their hearts were so full of hopes and of fears. They could not help speculating as to

what Prince Sergius would do when he was arrested. They tried to make some plan to be out of his way, for they knew well it would be a most critical moment.

And that night Prince Sergius could not sleep either. He had been taken to his bed by his serfs when he was no longer sensible enough to resist them; and they had left him alone to sleep off his debauch. About ten the next morning they supposed he would open his heavy red eyes and call for brandy and coffee. But long before that hour, in the bitter chill and deep darkness which precedes the dawn, Prince Sergius awoke in a great terror,—a terror so great that it quite sobered him. He was in a sweat of agony, and he cowered among the bed-clothes like a frightened child. He rung bell after bell with a frenzied force, and he called every servant in the palace. He wanted light and company. He wanted

his servants to talk to him, and they were afraid. Then he sent for Mr. Cecil.

"I am a fool, sir," he said, with a forced laugh. "I have had a dream—a very bad dream! It has terrified me. I know not what to think of it; I have been drinking very hard, I suppose?"

"You have been drinking very hard indeed, Prince," Mr. Cecil answered.

"But why should I be afraid of a dream? It is indeed folly."

"Sometimes the Great and Holy One speaks to the children of men in dreams. If he speaks, then even the kings of the earth tremble. What did you dream?"

"I cannot tell you—a dream of horror—of evil for evil—of death without mercy. I cannot rid myself of it—I cannot drink it away—I am afraid to drink. Something is going to happen. Mr. Cecil, I have always been kind to you?"

"Yes, Prince."

"Then do not leave me. What is

coming to me? Is it death? If I am sick, send to Moscow for a physician. Spare no expense. Care for me with your own hands. I can trust you. When I am well, I will make you rich. I swear it! But it is not sickness—it is — Oh, Mr. Cecil, what is it?”

“I know not, Prince.”

“And I know not — some nameless terror. I wonder if it be possible to fly from it! I will go to Moscow, to St. Petersburg.”

Then he became silent, and walked up and down the room in an agony of apprehension. Frequently he glanced behind himself as if he was followed, as indeed he was, by the memories of his many crimes. He did not talk to Mr. Cecil, yet he begged him to stay by his side.

At length the dawn came, gray and misty, with the promise of much snow in its damp, depressing atmosphere. The servants made breakfast and brought it

in while yet it was candlelight. Prince Sergius eat like a man in a hurry, or going on a long journey, as he really was, though as yet he did not *know*, he only *felt*, the fate before him.

But as the daylight came, and with it the quite usual snow, and all the customary duties and occupations of the day, the miserable Prince began to throw off the appalling influence of the night terrors. He sent for his servants and bullied one, and punished another, and sent some here and some there, and finally gave the word for Matrina to come to him.

“Thou wilt go back to St. Petersburg to-day. I will get the papers wanted for thee to carry. Dost hear?”

“Pardon, great Prince! Let some other be sent. I beg thee that I may stay here with my old, dear companions.”

“I thought that thy young mistress was the world and its fulness to thee. How is this, then?”

“My young Princess has now many friends and many new servants. What am I when there are so many? I pray thee, Prince, that I may remain at Bazaroff.”

He seemed much pleased at her request, and granted it. Then he went to his secretary and began to arrange the papers to be sent to Count Vasil, and Mr. Cecil perceived that he might now obtain permission to go to his own duties.

Michael was dressed and had an air of expectation. “I am sure that something is going to happen, dear master,” he said. “This morning I am not able to study. I must sit still and watch.”

And, oh! how long are hours that are watched away. Tick-tick went the dreary old inexorable clock. It would not hurry for Michael’s feverish anxiety. Hour after hour of the common, every-day life! *Nine* o’clock! *Ten* o’clock! *Eleven!* And as eleven struck, a man driving for

life or death came into sight, a black spot on the far horizon. Michael stood up breathless. The sledge came nearer and nearer. "*Open! Open! Open!*" its occupant cried as he approached the gates. Once in the court he gasped the name of Prince Sergius, and with his last strength dropped a letter at his feet.

The letter was from Alexander Kergoff. After betraying his confederates, he asked permission to communicate with Prince Sergius Bazaroff. The authorities were doubtless aware of his purpose, but they were not averse to the sending of the "warning" which it was evident Kergoff intended. The prosecution of Sergius Bazaroff would involve other nobles of high rank. It was hoped by many of the officials that Sergius would "exile himself," and spare other great families their share of the Emperor's wrath. So Kergoff was permitted to write to his colleague, and the letter dropped at the

feet of Sergius Bazaroff was the message sent:—

Friend Sergius Bazaroff:

We are discovered, and thou wilt have the price to pay. Had thou been less saving of thy gold, thou might have saved thy life. Thy brother, Prince Ivan, is free; is made a grand marshal, and is placed near the Emperor's person. The little girl did it all. The letter I wrote thee she found and gave to Count Vasil, and so on till it came to the Czar's own hand. Very well, thou wilt pay now far more than the two thousand rubles I asked of thee; thou wilt pay in blood and in life drops. Still, I and thee have drank many a night away together; thou art a comrade, and so I say unto thee, *Fly! Fly* for thy life! *Fly* to escape the knout! *Fly* from worse than death! As for me, I shall doubtless go to prison, and it is all thine own fault.

ALEXANDER KERGOFF.

This was the terror he had dreamed about — that his soul apprehended — whose coming had cast such shadows of dread and horror before it. Prince Sergius, for once, found no words for his passion. He stamped, and foamed at the mouth, and ordered his sledge in a scarcely articulate shout. And then, in bounding leaps, like the running of a wild animal, he flew up the staircase to the schoolroom.

VII.

“He releaseth the prisoners. He giveth gladness of heart.”

“For the Lord knoweth all them that sin against him, and therefore delivereth he them unto death and destruction.”

IT was the eve of the Epiphany, and the Christmas festivities in Count Vasil's house were nearly over. On the morrow the forty “dear companions” were to separate, and they were already exchanging trinkets, and locks of hair, and promises of remembrance. Perhaps in each young heart there was a little of that sadness which comes after joy that is long continued.

Theodora was also a little disappointed. She had fully believed that in one of the “holy evenings” between Christmas and Epiphany her parents would certainly

arrive. So, amid all her happiness, she was constantly thinking of a still greater happiness coming to her; and it had not come.

"It takes such a long time for a good thing to arrive," she said to her aunt. "I am so much disappointed, aunt. Here is the eve of the Epiphany, and to-morrow it will be only the common world again."

"To be sure, that is the truth," answered the Countess. "I, too, am a little disappointed, and also a little weary. But then we must not get neglectful at the last. And here are the stars. We must go out to welcome the Epiphany stars."

"Here are the stars," cried Theodora. "Here they come! With such a holy air they come, one by one, into the calm sky."

Then the Countess rose and went into a room where the children were sitting telling stories to one another, and she cried, —

"Children, here are the Epiphany stars,

and no little girls to greet them! *Fie!* *Fie!* This is a neglect not to be excused by many words."

Then there was a calling aloud, and a running about for maids, and pelisses, and muffs, and caps, and very soon the whole forty children were standing together in the open court, singing the parting song:—

"O stars! stars!
Dear little stars!
All ye, O stars!
Are the fair children,
Ruddy and white,
Of one mother.
Send forth through the christened world,
Dispensers of happiness!"

And as they were solemnly and happily singing, some one called for Theodora in an eager, startled voice. She stood silent a moment, and then fled into the house. There was a tall man in the hall, covered with furs, and Count Vasil was kissing his cheeks and shaking both his hands; and, also, there was a lady lying back in

a large chair, and the Countess Vasil was chafing her hands and crying over her, and the moment Theodora saw the white, sweet face lying on the black fox furs, she knew it was her mother's face, and she flew to her with outspread arms, crying out, "Mother! mother! Oh, my dear mother!"

She was in her father's arms at last. She was folded to her mother's heart. She was kissed and fondled with all those sweet pet names that good girls love; but far more joyful was it to hear father call her their "deliverer," their "good angel," their "blessed daughter"! And that night Theodora did not remain with her dear companions; she was with her parents. But they all rejoiced with her, and were glad because of so happy a reason for her absence. Ere they went to bed, Maria Stromnow made up a song of thanksgiving to God and the Czar; and they sang it before the door of the

Princess Nadia. It was a very pretty song, and every line ended with the Russian cry of "*Slawa!*" which means "glory!" And the Princess Nadia was much pleased and affected when she heard the sweet, shrill voices of the forty children singing praise and thanksgiving for her return to her home, and friends, and freedom.

At first there was so much to say that nothing was quite certain. Every question and answer was confused by their irrepressible exclamations of gratitude to God and love towards each other. But at length, when they had eaten together and were calmer, they began to talk of the great event which had brought about the restoration of Prince Ivan, and the justification of his loyalty and honor. Neither the Prince nor Princess had heard the particulars, and Theodora, sitting on her father's knee, and clasped by his arm, told again every event of that fateful

day, when Kergoff had bullied Prince Sergius, and the latter, in the delirium of his rage and drunkenness, had lost the letter which Michael found.

“So you see it was Michael, after all, whom God chose, dear father and mother. It was to Michael, God sent the white paper.”

“The white paper which opened the prison doors for your mother and I, Theodora! And then consider, my child, how the kind, wise God made all things work together; for the paper might still have been in Mr. Cecil’s collar had not our dear sister, the Countess Vasil, just at that very time sought and received the Czar’s permission to take charge of your education. Then, again, consider how useless the paper would have been even in St. Petersburg, if it had not fallen into such wise, brave hands — the hands of your dear uncle Vasil, for they rested not until they had passed the mighty piece of

white paper into the mighty hands of the great Czar. It is all the Lord's doing! It is altogether wonderful! *Slawa! Slawa!*”

Then the Princess Nadia raised herself suddenly from her couch and said, “But Michael? We must hasten to Michael! Tell us what you have heard of our good son. And what news is there from Bazaroff? Who has been to tell of the arrest of that base wretch, Sergius Bazaroff? Surely, ere this hour, he is in the hands of the men appointed to punish such miserable ingrates!”

“We have no news of importance from Bazaroff,” answered the Count. “We expected you to return by that route and to call there. Indeed, Michael and Mr. Cecil were confidently looking for you, and for this reason they declined our invitation to come to us. ‘How sad would be my parents’ return to their home if there was no one to welcome them! I will, therefore, remain to meet them, and

this will be my Christmas joy.' It was thus and likewise Mr. Cecil wrote for Michael and for himself, and since that letter we have heard nothing at all certain. But then, as every one is aware, no news is the best of all news; for if there was any misfortune it would have brought its own tidings, quick as a bird flies."

"But surely Sergius is not yet there!" cried Prince Ivan. "Surely our Michael is not yet in the power of one so false and so cruel!"

"Ivan," cried the Princess, "we must go at once. There must not be a moment's delay. Who knows what torture our dear boy is suffering?"

"Sergius has fled," said Count Vasil. "That much is certainly known. But indeed I am astonished that you came not by Bazaroff."

"We thought it best to come direct to our Emperor. We will not sneak home

as to a hiding place. I said to Nadia, ‘We will go first of all to St. Petersburg, and cast ourselves at the Czar’s feet. We will show him that, in spite of our wrongs and our sufferings, we come first of all to him, whom we never were faithless to — no, not by a thought.’ ”

“That was a very wise thing to do,” said Count Vasil. “You did exactly right. To-morrow you can offer your homage, and then whatever there is to be known, that you will be told.”

And the Princess Nadia, being exceedingly weary, was thankful for a day’s rest. If Sergius had fled, and Michael had the care and company of Mr. Cecil, the boy was not either in sorrow or danger. “God has been so good,” she said, “as to so arrange matters that my dear daughter is at my side; therefore, I can wait patiently until the Prince has expressed his loyalty, and done those things which are necessary to his new position.”

But a swift messenger was sent to Bazaroff with the glad tidings of the return of the exiles, and the promise that in a few days they would follow their letter; and, in the mean time, Michael was to assure himself that all was well for the future. And this messenger was well sent, because it was nearly a week before they could prudently start for Bazaroff. Many things relating to Prince Ivan's great office had to be attended to, and the Princess Nadia soon discovered that she was destitute of civilized clothing, and also of many other things necessary to her welfare and comfort. It is true she would not have thought of these things if there had not been the imperative duty of delay in regard to the public affairs of Prince Ivan; but as the delay was necessary, she did all that was possible to improve the time.

And Theodora, who had become quite familiar with the great city, and with the

fashions of it, was delighted to accompany her dear mother and aunt to the magazines of silks and laces and fine linens. She would scarcely loosen her clasp from her mother's hand. It seemed yet such an impossible joy that she feared to awaken as from a dream and find herself "motherless" once more. Little girls will understand how happy Theodora was in this new companionship; and yet how she feared it might in some way be again taken from her.

After all, she was delighted when, at last, one clear cold morning they started in high spirits for Bazaroff. The Prince and Princess were in a handsome sledge, drawn by four strong, swift horses, and Theodora sat at their feet, in the bottom of the sledge, cuddled up in the furs, with her head resting against her dear father and mother. And every little while her father stroked her rosy cheeks, and her mother stooped

and kissed her; and when they came to an inn, Prince Ivan, after assisting the Princess, always came for his little daughter and carried her in his arms to the warm stove.

She did not think this journey sad and tiresome. She chattered, and slept, and thought of the happy times before Michael and herself, and she was as merry as a spring song bird. Yet as they came near to Bazaroff she noticed a little anxious cloud on the face of Prince Ivan. And by and by he spoke of the thing which was making him feel anxious and uncertain. He said, —

“Now that we are so near our home, I think it right to mention a report that came to St. Petersburg the very day before we left. I think little about it; it wanted every proof; but, however, it is this: that just before Prince Sergius fled, he had a quarrel with Mr. Cecil, whom he accused of stealing the letter,

and that shots were fired, and it was thought the tutor was wounded seriously. Again, it was thought it was among the serfs he discharged his pistol as he left the palace."

"But why, dear Ivan? What had the serfs done? He must have had a reason for such cruelty."

"On the face of the head steward he saw a smile, and on the faces of all something which angered him. He thought, doubtless, that every one was in the conspiracy against him, and he fired into a group who stood around the steward in the courtyard. I heard that three were dead, and others wounded. I think the whole story improbable, or, at least, very much exaggerated."

"Yet it makes me very anxious in my heart. Theodora has often told us how Sergius hated our Michael. I am afraid it is our dear son who is hurt. Can we not make more speed?"



The escape from Bozaroff.

“The horses are doing their utmost; and if the heir to a great name and estate had been wounded in the least, that would have been a thing for certainty. We should have heard the smallest particular. To hurt Michael is a wound to the Empire; the Czar himself would have been informed. And I am sure Mr. Cecil would protect Michael, even with his own life.”

“Then it is most likely Mr. Cecil who suffers. And he is our tried friend. I am now most anxious to reach Bazaroff. And yet I fear, lest I am hurrying to meet trouble.”

“I do not fear any calamity. Sergius was ever a great coward. He would think only of his own safety. If he was bent on flight, nothing on earth would stay him for one moment.”

Still, after this confidence, the Princess and Theodora found themselves unable to converse. They were watching for the

first glimpse of the rounded towers of Bazaroff. It was the middle of the day when they saw them. As they drew nearer, it was evident that they were watched for and expected. They could see the people gathering around the vast, square building, standing in the midst of its bare, white plain. Their dark figures upon the dazzling snow, and against the still, clear horizon, were sharply defined. And the gates stood open, and the bloodhounds were scampering about the outskirts of the palace.

There was a solitary figure at the entrance, and the Prince Ivan said decidedly, "It is Mr. Cecil. Therefore, dear Nadia, he is not injured."

The Princess did not answer, neither did Theodora. There were fears in each heart they did not like to voice; but when they reached the palace, and saw no one but Mr. Cecil and Matrina to welcome them, the father and mother and sister of

Michael turned pale as if smitten with death. The serfs indeed crowded around the sledge with affectionate greetings and tears of joy; but Prince Ivan found it difficult to answer. He could only lay his hands across his breast, and then outstretch them with a blessing; and as he did so, they entered the court, and Mr. Cecil and Matrina were at their side.

There was a moment of silent embracing, and then Prince Ivan said in a voice of terror, "But where, then, is Michael?" And the poor mother looked eagerly into Mr. Cecil's face, for she was speechless with fear, while Theodora cried out, —

"Michael! Michael! Where is Michael, Matrina?"

"Michael is ill," answered the tutor gravely. "He is very ill. Just now he is sleeping heavily. He has taken a powerful narcotic. Watching had made him so feverish, I thought it best to put him to sleep."

"Ill! Ill! Michael ill!" All were filled with a quick terror of some great misfortune, and no other word was spoken until they were in the great dining-hall, where Matrina laid the Princess on a couch, and the Prince and Theodora and Mr. Cecil stood by her side.

Then the Prince asked, "What has happened to Michael, Mr. Cecil?" and Mr. Cecil, speaking with a kind of triumph, answered, —

"Nothing to weep for or to lament over. I think, indeed, that Michael gives you the grandest of welcomes."

"But he is ill! And how then? And why?"

"He was shot by Prince Sergius!"

"Permit me — I must go at once to my boy."

"Pardon, my Princess. He is at the present hour not to be disturbed with safety. Listen with patience. I assure you there is no occasion for weeping, or for hurry."

“To be sure!” said the Prince. “Let us be quiet and patient. How was our dear boy shot?”

“I will tell you all. On the morning that Prince Sergius received the ‘warning’ from Kergoff that all their plot was discovered, and he himself in prison, the Prince came to the schoolroom in a storm of raging passion. I heard him coming, and I knew that we had to face a madman. You could hear him breathing like a wild animal ere he flung the door wide open and stood within the room.

“I perceived that he was dangerous, and I ordered Michael to go away, but his uncle would not suffer him. He seized the boy by the throat, and so compelled him to listen to words that are not fit to be repeated.

“Michael looked bravely in his face. ‘*You are stronger than I am, and I must stand,*’ he said, ‘*but I do not listen! You are only lying about those whose names*

you should fear to speak.' Then Sergius struck Michael in the face ; but the boy was not daunted. He spoke the more loudly and firmly, '*My father is truth and honor! My mother is like the angels! It is you, Prince Sergius, who are a liar, and a thief, and a cowardly Judas!*' I thought surely that Prince Sergius would at these words strangle the child, and I strove to take him from his grasp and partially succeeded, but Michael was by this time beyond all fear or care, and he continued, '*Kill me if you so please. What do I care now? I know that my father and mother are free! I know that the Emperor has heard all! I know that my father will be here soon, that he is coming now!*'

"At these words Prince Sergius turned in mortal terror, and I took advantage of his fear. 'I beseech you to fly, Prince,' I said. 'Your sledge is at the door! It is, indeed, your life or death.' 'You are

a pack of traitors,' he screamed. 'You boy! and you Englishman! and you! and you!' He fired three times at Michael as he spoke, then at myself, and again and again at the serfs who had gathered on the steps and in the court. Some of them cursed him; and there was a decided movement to prevent him leaving Bazaroff. But he seized the reins and the whip, and so, lashing those who came within reach of the lashes, he left Bazaroff in a frantic gallop, and there has been nothing heard or seen of him since that hour."

"But were not officers of justice here to arrest him?"

"Yes; they searched the neighborhood for the road he had taken; but it was snowing when he left, and it snowed for three days afterwards, so that all tracks made by the horses and sledge were obliterated as soon as made."

"And what has been done for Michael?"

Is he likely to live?" asked the sorrowful parents.

"I sent to Malkoff for the famous Dr. Livadin. At first the wounds did well, but he has suffered much, and is likely to suffer for many months. However, there are good hopes for the dear child's life."

Thus they sat and talked for some time of the great tragedy which had been enacted in all their lives, and softly and full of love the parents and sister of the little hero went to his bedside and watched for his awakening; but it was not until the sun dropped low that Michael opened his eyes.

He found his father bending over him, and in a moment his mother and Theodora were kissing him with tears of pity and joy. Is it possible to imagine all they said to him? No, it is impossible. For at first, speech was too poor a vehicle for their emotion. The meeting eyes,

the meeting lips, the smiles and sighs, the hands clasping his hands, were far more eloquent voices.

Poor little wasted hands,—wasted with fever and suffering. His mother kissed and wept over them. His father praised his bravery and honor, and said he could have done no less, and no better, than he did.

“Had you permitted any one to defame your father’s and your mother’s good name, how then could you have defended your own?” he asked. “Our honor is yours, my dear son ; and I thank God, I have a son so brave and so true.”

After this Michael improved rapidly. He was nursed by his mother. His mind was relieved from all anxiety. He had nothing to fear, nothing to do but get well ; and his recovery was more perfect than his physician had at first hoped, or dared to promise. When the summer came, he was able to walk a little, leaning

on his father's arm; and though he was long weak, he was neither crippled nor disfigured by the three bullets, which had been his uncle's parting evidence of hatred and revenge.

There was only one complaint to make: Prince Ivan thought that Count Vasil ought to have been informed of Michael's condition; and he doubted whether, in this matter, Mr. Cecil had done wisely to be silent. But Mr. Cecil said, "Michael entreated me not to send any word which would shadow his sister's first Christmas. He thought he would be out of danger when she came back, and as for the suffering, he bore that without complaint." And Mr. Cecil added, "You must also see, Prince, that it was prudent to let the patient have whatever was necessary to keep his mind at ease."

"I see indeed that you have done all things well, Mr. Cecil," answered Prince

Ivan. "You have been my great, true friend. In a whole lifetime, I can never love you enough. What shall I do to show my love?"

"Suffer me to remain with Michael."

"That is but another favor on your part."

So the tutor and scholar remained close companions. They studied together, and they travelled together, and they did not part for one day, until Michael was ready to take his commission from the Emperor, and join the regiment which his father, Prince Ivan, commanded. Then Mr. Cecil went back to England, and he married a fair sweet girl, and they are living happily together at this very day. And their eldest son is called Michael, and it is very certain he knows the story of Michael Bazaroff as well as he knows his own name.

As for the Princess Theodora, she is

now a very great Princess indeed. She lives among kings and queens, and there is no splendor or majesty or luxury that is not common as daily bread to her. But she has kept through all temptations her child's heart, its purity and piety, and loving care for others. Many people say that she is not gay looking, but nevertheless she is very happy. Only, the great sorrow of her girlhood has been like the soft pedal to a piano; it has softened and sweetened all the loud, high notes of ambition, and unlimited wealth, and high station.

For she has never forgotten the privations, the fears, and the sorrowful heart-ache of her early years; and to her own happy girls and boys she tells very often the story lived through in that long, bare room at Bazaroff; the gloom, the loneliness, and the terror that dwelt there with them. These little people know all about Mr. Cecil and Matrina.

and what the brave boy said to the wicked Prince Sergius when he spoke evil of his father and mother.

And certainly they always think and speak of these things when they see Michael in his glittering uniform, riding at the head of his regiment, and looking like the hero he really was, when he gave Prince Sergius the lie to his face, and expecting, but not fearing, death, defended the honor of his father and mother at all odds.

Sometimes also in the winter nights, when the great snows were falling and the arctic cold was cruel and hardly to be borne, Theodora* would gather the children around her knee, and in a low voice tell how Prince Sergius galloped away from Bazaroff that fearful day and was never seen again by any mortal. "The snow was falling thick when he went, it came faster and faster, the night fell early, it was a dark; bitter night";

and at this point the Princess Theodora would generally cease speaking. Then one of her little children would ask in awed tones, —

“What came of Prince Sergius, dearest mother?”

And the answer was ever the same, —

“Only God knows, certainly, dear children. But listen! I will tell you what is known. When the snow went away in the spring —”

“Yes, mother?”

“When the snow went away in the spring, some peasants found beside a broken sledge —”

“What did the^e peasants find, dear mother?”

“They found part of his clothing, and — and —”

“What else did they find?”

“Alas, my dears, they found also a mangled skeleton!”

“*Oh! Oh!*”

“It was all that the wolves had left!”

“*Oh! Oh!!*” with a great sigh from each little heart, and a long silence. Then finally from Theodora, —

“My dear children, it was the death of a bad man. It is most true, that if you are good, everything will turn to your good; but if you do evil, everything will then turn to your sorrow and destruction.”

And one night as they sat talking of these things, the good patriarch of St. Petersburg came into the room, and he sat down and listened to the whole story; and when it was finished, he took the eldest child of Theodora upon his knee, and he said to him, —

“Michael Kazan, this is a story for the Bazaroffs and the Kazans to be very proud of. From it you may learn that the wicked and cruel man — he that plotteth mischief and evil — is not unseen by the good God, who is sure to punish him for

it. And now, Michael Kazan, tell me who it was that righted the wrongs of Prince Ivan Bazaroff, and the wrongs of his wife and children?"

And Michael Kazan, looking very proud and happy, answered, —

“God righted the wrong! God and two little children.”

THE END.

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